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FOR
FAMILY, CHURCH, AND SCHOOL.
VOL. II.

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FOR

FAMILY, CHURCH, AND SCHOOL.

BY

JOSEPH PARKER, D.D.,

Minister of the City Temple, London.

IN SIX VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY,

NEW YORK AND LONDON,

LITERARY RETROSPECT.

FROM very earliest days I have written a good deal in magazines and newspapers, but my first attempt at book writing appeared under the title of "Six Chapters on Secularism." In the matter of paper, print, and binding, it was probably as humble an effort as was ever made in the London press. The little book was afterwards expanded into a volume which bore the title, "Helps to Truth Seekers." This was a distinct advance, for, to the best of my recollection, the paper was gilt edged, and the binding almost, but in a rudimentary manner, fanciful. This literary effort arose out of a three nights' public debate, which I held during my first pastorate, with Mr. G. J. Holyoake, an expert in debate, very penetrating in criticism, and most courteous in manner. During my first pastorate I came in for what was then, in my estimation, quite a little fortune. My house rent was £20 per annum, and my income was £150 a year. At the moment which is now most vividly before my memory, I was entertaining two Primitive Methodist ministers during a denominational meeting which was being held in the town. What was my surprise one morning, as we were all sitting at breakfast, to receive a letter from Glasgow, conveying the thrilling

intelligence that the second prize had been awarded to an Essay of mine, which I had written in response to a public advertisement. The letter brought with it a cheque of the value of £75 ! I had never had such a sum in one payment in my life. I could not but connect the success of the Essay with the little effort we were making to be hospitable to two deserving guests. The first prize was awarded to the Rev. Dr. Wylie, of Edinburgh. The moment I saw his Essay I felt at once that the prize had been properly awarded. Can a young writer ever look behind him after he has found seventy-five sovereigns in his private inkhorn ?

I have known somewhat of the risks and enjoyments of anonymous authorship. "Ecce Deus" was published anonymously, humbly following the illustrious example of "Ecce Homo." I had many a secret delight in hearing men who had no particular regard for me frankly commenting upon this new book. If my name had appeared upon the title page I knew well what their comments would have been ; hence my satisfaction in hearing unrestrained remarks which I knew to be independent and unprejudiced. What was my delight, on my first visit to London, to be met by a well-known publisher, who asked me if I would accept £100 as the price of my next book ! I felt myself in Klondyke long before Klondyke was heard of. Some time after I published a 12s. book entitled, "The Paraclete ; An Essay on the Personality and Ministry of the Holy Ghost." This book was also anonymous. It turned many hostile critics into cordial friends ; I mean critics who were hostile to

the books which bore my name ; it is due to them to say that their perusal of this book gave me a warm place in hearts which had been hitherto stubbornly closed against me. Then I published a volume of another kind, entitled "Springdale Abbey : Extracts from the Letters and Diaries of an English Preacher." This was also published without the author's name ; many a kind word was said about it ; perhaps the kindest of all being written by Dean Alford when he was Editor of the *Contemporary Review*. All these books have long been out of print. I am beginning to inquire whether some of them would be welcome to another generation. A book on which I set high value, as carefully expressing my deepest convictions on the greatest of all topics, also out of print, is "The Priesthood of Christ : A Restatement of Vital Truth." More and more do I become convinced that the Priesthood of Christ—the Atonement rendered by the Son of God—is the one supreme subject of an inspired Christian ministry. I have no faith in ethical sermons that do not owe their doctrine and their energy to the Cross of Christ. The largest work which I have issued is entitled, "The People's Bible." This work extends to twenty-five octavo volumes, and contains everything in spirit, if not in substance, which I have known and felt and handled of the Word of Life. As I have said before, it is the very soul of my whole ministry. Besides these definitely religious, or theological works, I have issued several volumes dealing with life and character in various relations. I think I can truly say that all my writing has, in some considerable degree, been contributory to my distinctly pulpit work. Even

my studies of character and lighter delineations of life have assisted me to illustrate many aspects of Christian experience. More and more have I been struck with the happy results of a Gospel written, as well as a Gospel preached. With a full heart, a heart indeed overflowing with thankfulness, I praise God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for the testimony which has been borne respecting the edifying and illuminating influence traced to my literary efforts. These efforts have not distracted my ministry, they have rather helped to its expansion and concentration. I am not aware that amidst all the criticism with which I have been favoured I have ever been charged with idleness. Now that my public day is closing I have to thank God that my work has always been my highest, I had almost said my only, delight.

What of reviews? Like everything else they are distributable into good and bad. There are honest reviewers, who will not shrink from giving a fair appreciation of every work submitted to their judgment. When such reviewers have occasion to find fault they never descend into personal abuse, they quote the matter which they disapprove, and thus give the reader an opportunity of judging independently. No reviewer who illustrates his criticism by fair quotations from the author is to be feared. The man who may do mischief is the anonymous critic, who reviews only in epithets and sneers. But even his mischief ultimately refutes and disappoints itself. All writers must expect to meet enmity in some quarters of the press, but taken as a whole I have every confidence that in the long run books will have justice done to them

according to the degree of their merit. It is becoming known, more and more, that even reviews are written only by mortal men. Once there was a kind of superstition that a review must have dropped out of the sky, or must certainly come from the sanctum of some literary idol. But as education spreads, people are beginning to realise that even a reviewer is not other than a man of like passions with authors and readers. If any of my young friends have been discouraged by criticism, they should read the following anonymous letter which was sent to Lord Tennyson, and which I quote from his Life :—

“ Sir,—I used to worship you, but now I hate you. I loathe and detest you. You beast ! So you’ve taken to imitating Longfellow.

Yours in aversion

.”

Now that I am on the subject of books I should like to advise all young authors never to publish at their own cost and risk. They may depend upon justice being done to their manuscripts by the official “readers,” of well-reputed publishers. If such “readers” condemn the manuscripts, authors should as a rule accept the condemnation, and not try to disprove it by publishing their books at their own expense. Depend upon it, if there is anything in a book a publisher of good standing will certainly find it out. If publishers shrink from publication, authors should not rush in where publishers have lost heart. Of course here, as elsewhere, there may be exceptions of a very startling character, but I should say that the exceptions are few in number, and that

they do not invalidate my doctrine of caution on the part of inexperienced writers.

I have sometimes thought that my friends would like to see how I have used my Study Bible. I will subjoin a page of it that they may see how the margin has been treated :—

Genesis xxvi.

18. And Isaac digged again the wells of water which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father ; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham : and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them.

19. And Isaac's servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing water.

20. And the herdmen of Gerar did strive with Isaac's herdmen, saying, The water *is* ours : and he called the name of the well Esek ; because they strove with him.

21. And they digged another well, and strove for that also : and he called the name of it Sitnah.

22. And he removed from thence, and digged another well ; and for that they strove not : and he called the name of it Rehoboth ; and he said, For now the Lord hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.

23. And he went up from thence to Beer-sheba.

24. And the Lord appeared unto him the same night, and said, I *am* the God of Abraham thy father ; fear not, for I *am* with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed, for my servant Abraham's sake.

25. And he builded an altar there, and called upon the name of the Lord, and pitched his tent there : and there Isaac's servants digged a well.

SIDE-LAMPS.

The Wells of Life :

Do not lightly obliterate the past.

Finding must be preceded by digging.

1. ESEK, Strife.

2. SITNAH, Hatred.

3. REHOBOTH, Room.

4. (Verse 33) BEER-SHEBA, Well of the oath ; property legally defined and secured.

The upper side of heredity.

It would seem as if the Wells of Salvation had to pass through the same process.

How would it be to print the whole Bible in some such fashion? Every sentence would be condensed to the uttermost. Every sentence would indeed be a kind of lamp on the margin. I have thought of calling it, "The Side-Lamp Bible." At a glance the reader would be able to see the meaning of the text, or would have some new thought brought before his mind. There could, of course, be no attempt at literary composition; in fact, literary composition would be fatal to my idea. I have not brought the matter under the attention of any publisher. What do my readers think of it? Would they like to have such a book? I have in view another edition of Holy Scripture to be known as "The Classified Bible." It would be marked either by line or by star, in red, blue, and green, not by differently coloured type, the signification of which would run thus—Red would indicate the passages setting forth the glory of Christ: Blue, the exceeding great and precious promises: Green, the invitations, welcomes, and encouragements of the Gospel. Not a word would be added to the Scriptures,—the Scriptures would immediately state and press their own case under each division. The operation would run thus:—What revelation does the New Testament make of the glory of Christ? For an answer I look to all the passages indicated by the red star on the margin. Or thus: To-day I would sun myself in the noon-rays of the holy promises, where can I find them? The answer would be made by all the passages clearly indicated by the star in blue. By their arrangement the blessed book would come more and more familiarly and tenderly into the flow of our daily life.

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STUDIES IN TEXTS.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, because thou hast been round about us we have not fallen. Thou hast beset us behind and before and laid thine hand upon us, and therefore in all wanderings and separations thou hast been near us ; thou hast brought us together in sympathy, in love, and in abiding hope. Good is the name of the Lord, as mighty is the Lord's right hand ! Thou hast led us forth and brought us in again, thou hast known our downsitting and our uprising, our going out and our coming in ; the whole story of our life thou knowest altogether. Thou God seest me : the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show himself strong on behalf of those who put their trust in him. We see now that our life is God's own plan. Thou hast omitted nothing from the purpose of thy love ; the humblest insect is thine, as is thine the strongest, eldest, of the archangels. It is not the will of our Father that anything should perish ; thy thought is life, eternity, completeness. We have wronged our own souls ; we have set ourselves against the law of heaven, and behold we have brought ourselves into the desolation of death. But we will not look at ourselves, we will look at God in Christ, the Father-God, the Saviour-God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then we see thy purpose, how large, how bright, how grand, how glorious altogether with every element that tells of present joy and eternal bliss ! The earth is thine, the day and the night are thine, the summer and the winter come from God : oh that we could yield ourselves wholly without question, doubt, or cloud into God's whole keeping ! then should we have rest at night, and our service in the daytime would be our delight. We thank thee for all Gospel messages ; we bless thee

that now and again we feel the fragrance of heaven in the winds which blow over the earth. Thou art near to remind us of thy nearness, as thou art near to help and succour, to deliver and to sanctify. We thank thee for our going out and our coming in ; we bless thee for the growing fondness of our hearts, for the sanctuary of God, for the light of truth, for the Cross of blood, for the altar of salvation. We bless thee for every hunger of the soul that tells us that it is not in the finite to supply the infinite. We thank thee for every disappointment and every bitterness and every experience of loneliness and sorrow that brings us nearer to the Cross. These are angels, not enemies ; they are sent of God to bring us home : may we respond to their appeal, and thrill lovingly under their gracious touch. Thou knowest us altogether ; thou knowest what burdens we are carrying, what serpents we are nurturing in our own hearts and consciences ; thou knowest what pains we have for which there are no words ; every fear thou knowest and every secret distress ; thou knowest, too, the treasures of our joy, our hopes, our satisfactions, our delights which cannot be expressed in human speech : come to us, then, according to all our sorrow and our joy, come to us in the night and in the day of our ever-varying experience, and comfort us with the grace of God that is in Christ Jesus. We thank thee for all we are and all we have : by the grace of God I am what I am : I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live :—may this be the experience of every heart, and whilst every soul becomes so conscious of guilt as to say, “ I am the chief of sinners,” may this confession be followed by the assurance that in consequence of the adopting grace of God every soul may be a prince of light in heaven. We commend one another day by day to thy loving care. Some cannot pray in words, some can only sigh in their desires and humbly hint at all their hunger ; the Lord look upon such, and answer them with a great reply. Some are planning that which is good, and cannot bring it to pass ; the Lord strengthen them that every holy purpose may be brought to fruition. Others are thinking out that which is evil ; the Lord confuse their minds, trouble all their thoughts with great bewilderment, and when they lift up their arm to strike the good may it be utterly powerless. Help all workers in thy cause, all preachers and teachers, all journalists and authors, all missionaries and visitors of the sick, all heads of houses who care for their families and seek to train them in the ways of goodness. The Lord thus comfort us all, and upon each set some seal of continued love, and through each express himself to those who are looking on and listening with curious attention. Open thy Book to us ; open our

understanding that we may behold thy law and understand it; open our eyes that we may behold wondrous things out of thy law: may we know thy Book to be the treasure-house of God; as in the days that are gone so in the days that are to come may we find in God's Book God's written heart. Thus do thou comfort thy children, and plentifully endue them with needed grace. The Lord be with our loved ones everywhere, with the sick and the poor, with the children of pain, with those who have no day in all the weary week because all is night and all is darkness. They would teach us how to bear thy will; may we look on with devout amazement and with devoutest thankfulness, and learn that the grace of God can descend to all the depth of human weakness. Good Lord, hear us, because we pray at the Cross; thou canst not from the Cross turn away; it is the meeting-place appointed by thyself. We are there, we see the Tree, we touch the Cross, we behold the Saviour. He died for us; in him we would hide all our guilt, all our weakness, all our fear. Amen.

I.

COMING BACK AGAIN.

“He brought us out that he might bring us in.”—DEUT. vi. 23.

WE are face to face with a great providential plan. Observe how this living pronoun creates a space for itself:—“He brought us out He might bring us in He sware unto our fathers He might preserve us alive.” Men do not go out and in by haphazard, if they be wise men, true in heart, obedient in will. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: his going out is of consequence to heaven, and his coming home again is recorded in the skies. “The very hairs of your head are all numbered”: not a sparrow falleth to the ground without your Father. There are no outlying provinces and colonies on which the Sovereign's eye does not rest. “Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” “Let not your heart

be troubled, neither let it be afraid ; if ye believe in God, believe also in me." "Also"—as if the planets were on the same level, as if there were but a step between God and his own Son. Have a complete faith ; do not be theists only. "Ye believe in God"—that is well—"believe also,"—there is a continuing and a completing faith, without which we should have a bridge without a keystone, a pillar without a capital. Finish and perfect your faith : "if ye believe in God, believe also in me."

We must not bring ourselves out. How prone man is to do this ! He will handle himself. A poor handling he makes of it ; yet it would seem as if by a thousand pressures he could hardly escape doing this. It is comforting, it is self-elevating, it has a look of business and energy about it : as who should say, "I am awake, I will do this with mine own hand." Why bring yourselves out ? you cannot take yourselves back again. No man can take up an old situation. History is made now in moments. You think you can come back after a week and find things just as you left them. No : the weeks are now years. A man may become a stranger in seven days and less. Yet what love of adventure there is in the youngest and in the oldest of men ! What is there beyond the river ? Why not take a survey of the land as it lies around that nearest angle ? We may find pasture down this unfamiliar path ; let us try, we can come back again. There is no sequence in such talk. We may not be able to come back again. What is that ghostly power that obliterates our footsteps, rubs away out of the sand the footprints of man, so that he cannot set his foot down in the old places and go back and have things exactly as they were a year since ? We cannot tell what it is, but that it is we know. We have so many

ambitions importuning us. We would build a house half-way up the mountain ; we might build it on the hilltop itself and get the first blow of the health-winds as they come from God's sanctuaries : who would be the worse if we did? Thus we give our poor souls no rest. It would seem as if some souls could not sit down and be quiet and enjoy God's smiling heaven and God's teeming and hospitable earth. Why so restless? why art thou disquieted within me, O my soul? Why not stay where God put thee, and wait until he sends for thee, and say to thyself in many a cheering monologue, "When God wants to bring me out he knows where to find me ; meanwhile, I am at home"? Our ambitions and speculations and adventures are not easily quenched, but to endeavour to quench them is part of our piety. A continual restraint of the appeals and voices and seductions that would carry us from the providential way is part of the discipline of life. Do not take yourselves out of anything ; for God's sake and your own, let your lives alone. If you are always taking up the tree to see whether it is growing, you will make growth impossible.

Only when God brings us out will God bring us in. We are too much given to tempting God, saying, "We will make a bad bargain and ask God to complete it, and make it up to us as if we had done nothing foolish ; we will adventure ourselves down this unfamiliar road ten miles, and when we find we are on the wrong path we can begin to pray." Many men would be glad to have a God on these terms,—a God who would allow us to make a thousand bad beginnings in order that he might have an opportunity of making a thousand happy endings. God's providence says, "If you will go out by yourselves you must stay out, I" (continues the angel of God) "will

only bring in men whom I have brought out." We can easily bring ourselves out. Any man can resign his function. You can withdraw from the ministry if you please ; you can give up your official status in the Church if you like. It is easy to withdraw : but having withdrawn, to what have you withdrawn? Why will not men look at both ends of a covenant, an arrangement, or action? The young man could withdraw from his position in the city to-morrow, and for the space of one-sixtieth part of a second he might look as if he were independent. It is so easy to withdraw, and often so ridiculous. Grow where you are ; gather moss where you are at present placed. The young sapling looks beautiful, yet after all there is about the grey mossy old tree something that you cannot find upon a mushroom. It has a religious look ; nobody knows how many generations it has seen go to their burial. And still upon its ever-young branches it bears the latest spring and summer seal of God : it is the root that is old : the little leaf that trembles on the tree is a child born yesterday. You can go if you like. Remember that if God does not take you out it is unreasonable on your part to ask him to take you in. Give your whole life every day, and every hour, and every moment, to God, saying, "Jesus, still lead on" ; saying, "Except thy presence, thou covenant God, go with me, take me not up hence : I weary for something else, I pant, I pine, for some new opportunity ; but if it be thy will that I should not go, then make me glad, if not with rapture, yet with quiet content of soul."

God brought his people out of bondage that he might bring them into liberty. We are born into bondage. The freest of us is a bondman. Bondage is of many kinds and qualities. We are prone to think of bondage as mere

servility. Bondage is more than serfdom of that basest type. Bondage is a large word, signifying a large experience, and signifying also an experience that is necessary, that is to say, an essential part of any true, solid, and perpetual growth. We are all in the bondage of littleness. We are surprised at ourselves when we grow an inch. Whilst men told us we were little, we scowled upon them, and sometimes were tempted to become almost furious in our contempt because we thought ourselves so large; the moment, however, we grew a little we began to say, but quite within ourselves, so as not to be overheard by our former critics, "How true it is that we were little in soul but one short year ago! we could not have believed in this possibility of growth." God is continually leading us out of littleness that he may bring us into largeness. We shall know whether God brought us out of our littleness by the largeness into which we have entered. If our charity is larger, if our impulses are nobler, if our prayers take upon themselves a new grandeur of desire, then know that it was God whose key turned the lock, it was God whose voice called us out of our dwarfed estate into largeness of manhood. There is a bondage of darkness, a bondage of bigotry, a bondage of thinking that we are the people and the temple of the Lord are we; and all people who do not go with us are wrong, benighted, and foolish. God will lead us out of these misconstructions of others that he may lead us into a true appreciation of our brethren. Know that it is God who has liberated you from bigotry when you feel that you can commune with the whole Church, named and unnamed, high and broad and low, and find in all earnest souls a point of sympathy and brotherhood

God is always leading us out that he may bring us in.

He takes us out of labour that he may bring us back to it. Jesus Christ when addressing his disciples said, "Rest awhile." Christ is in both these words ; the whole wisdom of God is in these two little terms. "Rest"—a mother's word, a doctor's word, a friend's word—"awhile"—because rest becomes weariness, doing nothing becomes an intolerable monotony ; it means waste of faculty, desuetude means decay, decay means death. "Rest awhile"—one hour, one night, one year ; but a limited and defined time ; and the "awhile" means after work resumption of toil, continuation and completion of holy service. This is God's providential plan with regard to man, and animal, and growing seed, and patient motherly earth : to each of these God says, "Rest awhile"—rest by change. The horse needs it as much as the man. You must not continue the horse too long in one dreary furrow. This is the great gospel of Providence, a gospel which means growing liberty, growing strength, enlarging opportunity for doing good. Some have been resting a long while ; the word "long" is not in the original instruction ; Christ's words are two, and two only—"rest awhile" : earnestness will determine the length of the "while." The sluggard and the lazy soul will say, "A long while" ; the earnest, burning spirit will say, "It is now high time to awake and to resume the great scheme and service of life." Let conscience judge, let reason have her word in this fray.

Sometimes God leads us out of wealth that he may lead us into it. The wealthiest men I know are the poorest. I would not keep company with them ; I would not be known far and wide to know much about them. Some of the poorest men I know are the richest. We shall get to right definitions by-and-by after severe discipline, after coarse experience, after many a battering

and down-tearing of our palaces. How some men can live with all their wealth would be a wonder inexplicable to me if I did not know that they had deafened themselves, plugged their ears against the cry of pain and prayer of need. God will have the upper hand of such. They have no joy. If there be any joy in metallic chink and jingle, such joy they may have; but real joy, sharp, quick, good as the wine of God, never enters their poor hearts. If God takes away our wealth, he means to give us more and more: if God is at the beginning of Job's distresses, he will be at the completion of Job's fortunes: if Job shall take the case into his own hands, he shall fight it with his own hand; but if God begin to strip him and to bruise him, we must wait until the latter end comes and then interpret the purpose and the scheme of heaven. Things must not be judged in their fermenting processes; they must be judged when God says concerning each of them, "It is finished."

God brings us out of youth that he may bring us into manhood. That is his purpose. Youth itself is good and beautiful, excellent, but not enough. Who but God can see that line which divides youth from manhood? There is no noise in the liberation of the youth; there is no storm in the sky, there is no shaking of the earth; and yet, surely, solemnly, the young life grows into a larger, keener, deeper consciousness. It cannot say precisely by the calendar when, yet how truly it is aware of its liberation, its enfranchisement in a larger citizenship! God leads us out of the letter that he may bring us into the spirit. Most of us are prisoners of the letter. At the first it is necessary that literal bondage should test us; but we are not under God's guidance fully and consentingly unless we are daily growing away from the letter,—not

to make the letter a stranger or to isolate ourselves from it, but growing away from the letter as the edifice grows away from the foundation, and as the tree grows away from the root ; not leaving it, but carrying it up to higher significance, into blossom and fruitfulness. We have a familiar saying amongst us which is not true ; we say of certain things, " As easy as A B C ! " Now there is nothing in all literature so hard as these letters ; there is no reading in all the world so hard as the alphabet. Yet we say, " That is alphabetic, that is elementary, that is as easy as A B C, "—because, having grown away from the alphabet, we can come back to it and then find it easy. No child ever found A B C the very simplest amusement and completest entertainment that could enchant and delight the human mind. The alphabet means nothing ; there is no connection between one letter and another ; everything is formal, arbitrary, mechanical. It is in the alphabet that we find the difficulty ; the years will come and go, and then the mechanical will be forgotten, because we have entered into a spiritual consciousness, and now everything that is mechanical and arbitrary is under our feet ; we are masters of that department of the situation. It is even so with God's Book ; it is even so with God's own Son. The Apostle Paul says, " Henceforth we know no man after the flesh ; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet henceforth know we him no more. " The reader does not know the alphabet in the sense of that alphabet being an irritation or an exasperation to him. He knows it so well that he is not conscious of knowing it. Thus the letter may be translated into the spirit ; thus the creating Hand and the redeeming Blood may be carried up into what is called the Holy Ghost—the final, the eternal Personality. Have ye received the Holy Ghost ?

God thus leads us out of law that he may bring us into grace. The law is hard, the law is graven on stone or written in iron. It is, Thou shalt,—thou shalt not,—go,—come,—stand ;—a wholly imperative and military voice. We must pass through that school of the law, we must obey ; but obedience makes law easy and gracious. “Practice,” we say, “makes perfect.” That little maxim has its application to things spiritual ; doing the will, we learn the doctrine ; obeying the law, we come into the grace. How is it with us ? Here is a test or standard by which we may judge ourselves. Is it hard to be honest ? then we are in the letter. Is it downright hard and terrible to tell the naked truth ? then we are in the letter. Is it hard to go to church ? do we sigh on the road, and call it a weariness and a miserable tribute to conventional respectability ? then we are very low down in the letter. We shall know how far we have grown in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ by the ease and the delight which we realise in obedience and service and sacrifice.

God has led some of you out, and you do not know where to. There is no need for you to know. I do not want to know what God is going to do with me to-morrow ; I cannot live two days at a time. God has led some of you out of your fortune and ease and comfort,—do you think he has not a larger nest for you than he ever built before ? What is the size of your lost paradise ? It is but an inch square. God has all infinitude out of which to cut your new garden. “God has been dealing hardly with me,” says one. Stop ! Have you not been dealing hardly with yourself ? You gave up your situation in a temper ; do not call your sufferings providential ; call yourself a fool, or a suicide, and let God alone. You had all the bread you wanted for one day, and because it was not enough for a week you

threw it away, and now you say, "God hath stripped me and impoverished me." Stop! When a man throws away one crust he goes directly in the face of Providence, and he has no business to pray; he cannot pray; he may open his lips and utter the language of prayer, but there is no prayer in his atheistic words. If God took away your crust, it was to get you ready for a banquet. Examine yourselves very thoroughly in this matter. I have had occasion to do so, and I have never found God wanting. Sometimes I have taken my little life into mine own hands, and I dare not look at it; I have mauled it so and bruised it and ill-treated it and starved it, and then I wanted to whine and to say, "This is the way of the Lord": and thus I wanted to tell lies to myself. I began with impertinence, and wanted to end with impiety. God would not allow me to do so. When God has shaken the foundation of my dwelling, I have known all the time that he was going to give me a castle for a cottage, I have known that he was taking the little that he might bring in the great. Let God alone. Did he place you where you are? Have you reason to believe that you are in your providential position? Then stop there. But by taking one step across the road I could do wonders! So you may: how long will the wonders last? What are these yellow wonders, these rocket blazes of earth? Better have a crust with God than try to banquet on the wind. How sweet it is to realise the providence of life! how comforting to know that everything we say, think, or do, is of consequence to God! "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he will direct thy paths." Put the solemn doctrine to the test. Do not do it partially, but completely. Many persons want to have, so to say, one finger upon God and the rest of the body on the world and following out the policies

and doctrines of a meaner philosophy. "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon"; you cannot be going up and coming down at the same time.

Here, then, is our opportunity. This is the very doctrine of Christ. There ought not to be more than one step from any one text in the Bible to Golgotha. I find therefore that Christ is in this Deuteronomy text. We are not in the land of sterility; we are in the very paradise of God in every part of the Bible. Read the Sermon on the Mount, read the winding up of that unfathomable and unapproachably sublime discourse: Take no thought for the morrow; let the morrow take thought for the things of itself; sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof: consider the lilies how they grow; behold the fowls of the air how they feast at the table of God: if God so clothe the grass, will he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Why trouble yourselves with, What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed? Leave these things to the pagans; they have no higher philosophy, they live in the realm of calculation and invention and forecasting. You, children of the Cross, citizens of the city of God, live not in calculation, but in faith.

PRAAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, may we alway be known by our speech! Touch thou our lips, that we may utter words of wisdom in tones of music. May thy Gospel lose nothing by our utterance of it; may we so feel it in our hearts, and so test it in our lives, as to give no uncertain sound as to its glory and beauty and usefulness. Even a fool is known by his speech: shall not a wise man therefore be known also by his words? The Lord keep the door of our mouth; the Lord touch our tongue with a consecrating finger; the Lord send an angel with a live coal from off the altar to touch our lips that they may speak that which is wise and right. We thank thee for all the ministries that make up our life, for all heaven's pleading and all heaven's illumination; for all the tender work of God the Holy Ghost, who takes of the things of God the Son and shows them unto us, until we are filled with wonder at the unsearchable riches of Christ. May the word of Christ dwell in us richly, so that we may speak it naturally, speak it as part of our new mother-tongue, seeing that we are new creatures, born after the will of God, created after the image of the Invisible. May men take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus and have learned of him; may our speech be full of unction and savour, and wise words, and tender reverence, so that men may listen to us and say, "This is the speech of heaven, this is the music of eternity, this is the wondrous thing which God is saying to hearts from age to age." The Lord grant unto us enlargement of soul, enlightenment of mind, ever-deepening tenderness of spirit, and lead us to represent the Cross as well as preach it. May we know the power of Christ's sufferings, that we may know also the power of his resurrection. The Lord look upon all who are bowed down, on all who are old before their time, upon men who are hunted by great anxieties and loaded with heavy responsibilities. The Lord speak to the selfish, that they may thaw, and the ice of their greed may flow out in rivers of beneficence. The Lord stop the bad man on his road; may every ass refuse to carry him to his ruin. The Lord

be round about us and within us, his good hand be our eternal coronation, seeing that it is laid upon us in love. And when all these grey days and cold nights of time have come and gone, may we enter the city all light, all summer. Amen.

II.

SIGNIFICANT SPEECH.

“Thy speech bewrayeth thee.”—MATT. xxvi. 73.

THE meaning of these people was a very simple and limited one. So far as their meaning is concerned we need not trouble ourselves about it. Men often mean more than they know, more than they intend, more than they foresee. These people were simply accusing Peter of betraying his provincialism in the midst of his excitement. Some people when they are excited go back to their early vulgarities, their early mistakes; they discover themselves to themselves; things they had thought to be dead and gone come up again, having lost nothing of life or accent. The people simply accused Peter of a kind of Galilean patois: if he had been affecting any other manner of speech lately since he became a disciple, he soon lost it in his excitement, and his utterance became thick and guttural; and the more vehement he became the more provincial he became. That is about all the people meant when they brought this charge against Peter.

But how much further the matter goes than was intended by this personal and local reference! What a mystery of suggestion there is in accent, tone, choice of words, excited expression! We know men best oftentimes when they are excited; when they are cold, composed, deliberate, we know next to nothing about their quality; it is when

men are thrown off their guard, when they are confronted with unexpected circumstances, when they are under great cloud and sorrow, that they discover qualities of which they themselves were only sub-conscious an hour before or a year earlier. We must wait for crises to reveal men. These crises will come: on the day of business or on the day of death, when the great chance urges its appeal, or the great fatality points to its grave, then we shall know what men are made of,—their speech will bewray them, sentences will be startled out of them; there shall in very deed be an extempore eloquence. How true this is all through and through life! We say about our nearest friends sometimes, "They quite surprised us; we had no idea that they could have taken the matter in that light; they showed themselves to us quite in a new aspect." So our divine nativity is often betrayed by our speech, our higher manhood is suddenly and perhaps unconsciously revealed by accent and tone. In the very act of denying God we may be confessing him. The speech is more than word; it is tone, something behind the word that the word misrepresents or inadequately portrays or indicates. There are inborn proofs as well as external testimonies. The agnostic has his own anonymous liturgy. He is always insulting something with his ignorant but persistent prayer. He does not know it; it takes the outsider to find him out. What! from an agnostic such an expression?—why, even thou art from heaven, "thy speech bewrayeth thee"; thou art more than clay, that one little odd word in thy speech was God's signature; it was startled out of thee,—it was but an interjection, yet we can see a long way into human quality and capacity even through the medium of sudden interjection. Listen intently to the speech of men, and you will find that they cannot get rid of their mother-tongue. The mother-tongue of man is divine.

Even profanity uses religious words when it burns with real passion. One world is not enough to curse by ; men urge themselves into other worlds even when they want to damn their fellow creatures. See the profane man, how he stands on two worlds, one foot on the higher, another foot on the lower, and in no other attitude could he give full vent to his evil prayer. His speech bewrayeth him. We know him by his curse. The curse does not reveal only the lower and vulgarer aspect of his nature ; it shows something other and higher and worthier. The man who can curse and denounce thus could pray wondrously well if his heart were turned in that direction. The man who can curse and swear and say of his Master, "I know not the man," may be good at crying, he may go out and weep bitterly ; no two tears or three can express all his quality ; only a river of hottest brine can tell you he has plagued his own soul by his very profanity. Do not let us take always the lowest view of a man even in his sin. The tree far down yonder in the lake is no farther down than it is up ; if it were not up it could not be down. O profane soul, seeking other languages than the language of purity with which to express thyself, know this very vehemence of pressure upon another estate, though unworthy of thee, is an indication that even you were meant to pray.

Even the prayerless man prays. We say to him, "Thy speech bewrayeth thee." There is no formal liturgy, there is no act of public worship identified with the life ; there is rather a repudiation of religious ceremony and church association. All that is true, and yet, poor soul, "thy speech bewrayeth thee." Listen ; these are words I have caught from thee unawares ; I wrote them down from thy lips ;—I wish—I long—I hope—I desire. "Thy speech

bewrayeth thee!" These are religious words; these are liturgical expressions; these are little sparks thou hast caught from the burning coals of God's altar. I wish, I long, I hope, I desire,—thou art beginning with little words with great meanings. The child begins with words of one syllable, so do you. You say, "I wish, I long, I hope, I pine, I yearn"; properly interpreted, all that means prayer, the outgoing and the upgoing of the soul after the mystery of self-completion; all this half-dumb desire means that there is something wanted, something possible, something almost within hand-reach, something that a wish can almost get hold of. Dost thou know that that something else, that something other, and something better is God? Break it up into what words you will, make that divinest monosyllable into the longest words which perverted ingenuity can elaborate and construct, still all comes back to God; the fractions are many, but they total up into the same integer. "Thy speech bewrayeth thee." You cannot be an atheist. You can go just as nearly towards atheism as seems to be possible, and yet between you and atheism there stands only one quantity—and that is God. How is it that ye do not understand? How is it that you do not interpret fully and correctly all these sub-tones, interjections, sudden exclamations, and all these words of solemnity which signify want, desire, out-rush of heart in quest of a blessing that is so near yet so far? The soul cannot do without the horizon. Blessed be God, it can never get it; yet that horizon is an eternal lure, an infinite fascination.

Even the worldly man has his dreams of heaven. There is a man whom we call the worldling, and by that designation we mean a man who lives for one world, so far as that is possible. He grubs in the earth, he spends his

life in digging his own grave. He never lifts up both eyes to the radiant heavens; he gathers and scrapes. Yet even he has in his speech a note that does not belong to this little space called the earth. Worldly man, what of the future? are you tired? Yes: but I am hoping that one day I shall have rest. "Thy speech bewrayeth thee!" "Rest"—that is a religious word. Speech would be poor but for its religious contributions. Do you know really the full meaning of your own aspiration and conviction? It means Sabbath, peace, harmony with all things, without and within, because harmony with God. He says, "Things are very entangled and perplexed and vexing, but he is hoping that one day all things will come right." What!—"right," that is another religious word. The devil never invented it. The devil has even no geometry. He has nothing but chaos. When you struck upon that word "right" you stumbled against the eternal throne. You speak of rest and right: but why, when all things, according to your ostentatiously avowed creed, are to end in death? What do we care about rest and right under such circumstances? Is it any advantage to thee, thou poor fool, to die in evening dress? will death be less deadly because of thy poor finery? Why long for all this rest and right and peace and harmony when there is nothing beyond the grave? Why, poor, blubbering, whining creature, it is as if thou wert panting to be buried in silver buckles! Who cares? what does it come to? It is a pit after all, a clay pit, a pit in which no flowers grow, in which no birds sing. Why this talk about rest and right and peace? It is an idiot's tale, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing, when the end is death. But you know the end is not what you foolishly describe it as being. When you speak your mother-tongue, you speak of rest, right, proportion,—large, harmonic, beneficent service,—why not be just to your

mother-tongue? Who taught you this new verbiage, this miserable logomachy? Who troubled your tongue with rude languages? Let your heart talk itself out in the presence of sorrow, pain, fear, death, and you will surprise yourself how easily and naturally you turn to religious language when you would express the highest eloquence. Where is the advantage of driving up to a fatal precipice and saying, "We know it is a precipice, but we are driving in a chariot of gold and driving with six cream-coloured steeds." He is a fool who thinks it any advantage to drive to his ruin under such circumstances. Seeing that it is a death-potion that we drink, how shall we drink it? Will it be of advantage to drink that death-potion in some vase or goblet classically chased? or shall we drink it out of common pewter? What frivolous questions! Seeing that the potion we are about to drink is death, gulp it down as fast as you can, and hold no parley about vessels and vases and pots of pewter. Yet even these frivolities rightly interpreted have behind them all eternity and all divinity. Our speech bewrayeth us at every point. Out comes one glittering syllable, one tuneful tone, one little hint of something better. Let us rather dwell upon these little things, so called, and find in them openings upon infinity and eternity lighted and blessed by God, than dwell upon the ruder things, and say such men are infidels and atheists.

Even the secularist has his foresight and his outlook, his preparation for his future. He has his roll of words wherein he says to-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow. Even the secularist has his little preparation: here in this pigeon-hole lies his will; there in a pigeon-hole lies his life-insurance policy, and in another pigeon-hole lies his fire-insurance policy. I take all these pieces of paper

and tear them into shreds, and say, "What about the true preparation, the real future, the inevitable crisis? out of thine own mouth I condemn thee—'thy speech bewrayeth thee'!" There is a little future, there is a great future, and he is a fool who attends only to the little and not to the great. Thou wicked and slothful servant!

Even the fatalist has his devotion to discipline and education; he is always getting ready for something. What is he getting ready for when the thing is got ready for him and he cannot escape it? Yet, whilst he writes down his fatalistic creed in one column, he writes in the other what he is going to do to-day and to-morrow, and how he will make these arrangements, and see these parties, and make these offers, and come to these conclusions. What an extraordinarily consistent Bible is the fatalist's! No: God has so ordered things that no fatalist can be consistent; no bad man can be consistent; only prayer, truth, love can be wrought up into music.

We might reverse the whole of this line of thinking and say the Christian's speech should also bewray him. All his conversation should have a tone in it that nobody can mistake. It is said of the early disciples that men "took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus, and had learned of him." There was a fragrance around the garment that had been passed through the Garden. Who can go through a plantation of cedar-wood without the effect being proclaimed even by the very vesture he wears? Who can keep company with the great and yet himself be little? Who can live in atmosphere as if he did not live in it? Atmosphere is subtle, penetrative, formative; we cannot get hold of it properly in all its meaning and range of influence, but it is all the while educating and shaping and toning: so if we live with

Christ men will know it. Listen to this conversation ; here are men conferring one with another. How charitably they speak of men ! how hopefully they talk of human infirmity even ! how humble they are ! how helpful ! they are asking one another, "What can we do next ? how can we help the helpless ? how can we be eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame, and a tongue to the dumb ?" Who are these people ? Secularists ? Never ! Atheists ? No ! Who are these people ? Who are they ? Why, their speech bewrayeth them ; they have been with him who is Nazarene, Galilean, Carpenter, Son of man, Son of God, —bruised to death ; they have been with Jesus, and have learned of him. If our practical daily conversation and speech does not bewray us as followers of Christ, then our liturgies and ceremonies and ostentatious creeds are discreditable, hypocritical, worthless !

PRAAYER.

JESUS CHRIST has risen to-day: may we rise with him, and be no more found upon the earth as to our vital preferences and joys; may our citizenship be in heaven, and our expectation be from on high; we would fix our abode upon the hills eternal. We have great confidence now, because death has been despoiled, and the grave has been overcome; yea, death has been abolished, and there is One whose great voice is saying to us, "I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth on me shall never die." We rejoice in this sweet Gospel. Now there is no more death; there is but a falling asleep, a welcoming of the final slumber of the body, and then escape into the land all summer, all flowers, all peace, in which the labour is rest, and in which the enjoyment increases to ecstasy. All this we know through Jesus Christ our Lord, Son of God, God the Son. He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him. Not only did he suffer and die, he rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures; and now he is seated on the right hand of God, and he ever maketh intercession for us. He is our Priest, our Advocate; through him we have all things, and to him we would give all praise. Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto Thy name, thou victorious Son of man. May we study thy holy Book, Almighty God, to our soul's profit; may a sense of edification come with every perusal of the sacred page; may we know of a truth that this is none other than the word of God, so vital, so profound, so tender, so ancient yet so modern, stretching back into the unmeasured eternity, yet coming down upon us like showers that water the earth. We bless thee for all thy care: from year to year thou dost guide us; thou dost make our bed in our affliction; thou art the light of every morning and the rest of every eventide, and as for the mid-day glory, it is but a dim emblem of thy splendour. May we rest in the living God, and wait patiently for every unfolding of Providence, saying, "Our life is in God's hand, and our days are recorded in heaven, and

there is but one God, even the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Help the helpless; read the heart of the speechless; lead the blind by a way that they know not; and bring us, from land and sea, and city and wilderness, and joy and sorrow, into the great homeland, where labour shall be music, and where no name shall be known but the name of the Son of God. Amen.

III.

THE THIRD DAY.

"To-day is the third day since these things were done."—
LUKE xxiv. 21.

WE did not think so much of it on the first day; on the second day we became troubled; but to-day we are quite dejected. "Beside all this." There is always another point, a decisive weight, a fatal fact. "Beside all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done": nothing can occur now: there has been time enough for a miracle if a miracle were intended; we are going home, broken-hearted. "We trusted that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel"—He who was about to redeem Israel. We find in our heart a dead trust. It always makes the heart heavy. Dead leaves, who would carry if he could help it? Blighted prospects, who would be rich with these if we could be rich with aught beside? It is when our hope dies that our lives go out; it is when our trust expires that our energy pines into nothingness. We live by faith. Give us a bright hope or a confident trust, and then we are strong; but take out that further life, the life that lays hold of the future, and there is nothing left but death. Man cannot stretch himself backwards, and lay hold upon things that happened a thousand years ago, unless they be con-

firmed and brightened by things that are going to happen to-morrow, be that morrow one round of the clock off or a thousand ages hence. That is the compelling, gladdening, sustaining power in life. We understand these men perfectly well; they are not talking a foreign language: we ourselves have had burials out of which we have got nothing but tears and distress, sadness and a great woe of heart; we have dug graves on which no flowers have grown; we have had days of bitterness, disappointment, exhaustion; we said, "It will happen to-morrow, the door will fly back, the emancipating word will be heard, and to-morrow the sky will not be large enough for our ecstasy." To-morrow has come, and it has been like another night. We are, therefore, in sympathy with these talkers; and not the less in sympathy with them because of their ignorance. No man knows to whom he is speaking, next whom he is sitting, with whom he is corresponding.

The things that make our life are always hidden from us, or veiled, or in some way so modified that we do not recognise them in all their vividness and in all their subtle implications. Think who the third man was who was listening. It is always so. Christ is emphatically the listener. He hears all our folly and ignorance, our empty speeches and our void prayers; and what can he do but turn upon us eyes of pity and looks of wonder?—at least, he would wonder if he did not know the heart in all the range and colour and tone of its mystery.

"What things?" said the traveller. He kept up the delusion—"What things?" The men said, "Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? And he said unto them, What things?" Is it not permitted

to love to be evasive, to try the heart, to tempt the spirit into copious eloquence, to lead the soul out in religious frankness? There is a deception that is honourable; there is a deception which is educative. The men would not have spoken another word had they known who their interlocutor was. Better let men babble out all that is in their hearts; when they empty their soul of all their sophisms and delusions and prejudices, they make room for the real, positive, constructive Gospel. It is thus that Christ trained these men, and it is thus that he is treating us now. He does not object to listen to our scepticism; he is always a hearer of our infidelities; he sits by us on the platform when we denounce him; and when we call Providence in question, God himself is our chief auditor. It is well that it should be so. The reply awaits the conclusion of our inanities.

The story of the Cross is never outworn. That Cross is always the surprise of the universe, the point in which amazement culminates in utterest dumbness. Who does not know the story, in the letter, as partly a Jewish story, partly a Roman story? but underneath all local colouring there is the very heart of the universe.

Jesus was led out to be crucified. "And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him." "And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left." And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." "And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost." "And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off,

beholding these things." Then came the end. Jesus was taken down, the body was wrapped in linen, and laid in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid. "And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid. And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the Sabbath day according to the commandment." But only "according to the commandment."

There is a restless rest; there is an impetuous tranquillity. How long the day was! how weary! It was worse than the day before. We can go through a tragedy better than we can go through a process of discipline which involves speechless, almost joyous, patience.

"Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning,"—literally in the deep dawn. It was the heart that kept time; the lazy clock was wrong; it was more than the clock indicated. The heart keeps the hour. The women were astir in the deep dawn: that transition point between night and morning, but nearer night. "They came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared." There they were ignorant; there they were the first sceptics of the Christian Church. They did not mean their scepticism. Who does that is really earnest and truly loving? Somehow we must be sceptical, and contradict our inmost selves, and do the things which we know ought not to be done. Jesus Christ had distinctly told them that he would rise again on the third day: but who hears what he is told? Every man listens to himself, to his fears, his prejudices, his flippant ignorance. So the women, having heard the words, but not understood them or really received them into the heart, brought their spices. Away with your untimely gifts! The spices

might have been of use yesterday, but the living man wants no such obligation. Sweet souls! they did not mean to contradict the Gospel, but they did contradict it. They thought they would be ready either way; and that is not right in the sight of God. We will be right if he has not risen, and we will be right if he has risen, because we need not say anything about the spices; we shall throw them away, and abide with him. We cannot be right both on the side of unfaith and faith; we must take a definite course, and follow it out with steadfastness. He that thus endureth unto the end shall be saved. Yet who does not keep a little scepticism at home? How impossible it would seem for us to escape utterly the influence of a semi-pious infidelity! Who can receive the word of God roundly, wholly, implicitly, and defy the devil in its name? Lord, increase our faith! The women "entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus." This was precisely what they had been told, yet they did not know it as it ought to be known: they knew it as a sound, but not as a necessary music of the life. The women, had they received the word of the Lord as it was intended to be received, would have been there in the deep dawn, singing, rejoicing; their faces would have been radiant, not a tear stain left behind, but the whole life a throbbing psalm, every look a triumph completed. So would it be with us in the church every Sabbath, only we must have our latent infidelity, our side scepticism, our wonder of the heart which signifies we are not quite sure what was said, but we mean to be right either way. There is only one right way, and that is the way of faith—all-seeing, all-hoping, all-dominating faith. And the angels said, "He is not here, but is risen: remember." To be chided by the angels! To be reminded of our Christian privileges by spirits that never shared

them. To have witnesses brought up against us whose very names we do not know, but who shall so testify as to vitalise memory and make us say, "They are right, and we are wrong!" Is nothing, then, done in secrecy? Nothing whatsoever. Can we not declare unto the Lord that we never heard his Gospel, and know that there were no witnesses who could testify against us? That is impossible. This picture represents the case as it is in its reality. "He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again."

The angels know every sermon that has been preached. Our memories shall be quickened by strange prompters; we shall not be able to tell lies without contradiction. "And they remembered his words." You would have thought they never could have forgotten them. But we forget everything, in all its tenderest music, in all its broadest, heavenliest aspects. We think we hear when we do nothing of the kind. There are some words which have been spoken which, if we had heard them in all the reality of their weight and significance, we never could have thought anything aside from them, above them, beneath them, beyond them; they would have arrested our attention, and have seized us with the grasp of a master-power. Thus we accuse ourselves. The sweet little song has gone; the great wise word has left a blank behind it; the noble rousing speech which was intended to make us heroic has died like a wind from the hills. We have to be reminded, prompted, wakened at every point. "They remembered his words"; saw them as men see pictures; they were words no more, but realities; splendid shining objects, excluding all other glory.

These angels read some wonderful lessons to those who listen and to those who read. Said they, "Why seek ye the living among the dead?"—What a contradiction is your pursuit! what a folly is your worship!—you are retrogressive. By an easy and not unnatural accommodation these words may be made to signify very much beyond the immediate incident. We are always seeking the living among the dead, going backwards when we should be going forwards, spending our time in getting up precedents when we ought to be letting out our energy in their creation. "This ought ye to have done, and not to have left the other undone." No man is at liberty to sever the arteries of history, to cut them in two, and allow history to bleed to death. History has an aspect in one way, and in another, including the past and the future. Nothing ever happened that it might terminate in itself. No seed ever went into the earth simply to die: it gives itself up (if we may personalise the case) that through death it might live a more abundant life: but no tiniest seed that had in it the possibility of quickening ever went down into the earth saying, "Let me die, and be forgotten." The seed has said, "Put me where you will, only connect me with all the ministry of nature, and I will come up and look at you again and you shall look at me, and that which is small to-day shall be in abundance to-morrow: bury me that I may live." But we cannot find the living Christ in dead usages, effete customs, obsolete ceremonies, churches that have survived their energy and their best reputation: we must always aim at seeing and realising a living Saviour, One who is present, ever condescending, ever meeting us, ever talking to us, ever proving his nearness by eloquence which makes the heart glow with unearthly love. We lose power when we dwell wholly upon the past. The Christian Church should realise the

fact that her most abundant and glorious heritage is in the present and in the future : let her seize and claim as a proprietor all healthy civilisation, all new and good ideas, all novel but sacred impulses ; they are all hers, they are all part of the unsearchable riches of Christ. Even the Cross may become but a thing of wood. The story of the Cross may become but a citation of dead syllables. We are only right when we make every reading of the Scripture a day of resurrection. This is the very spirit and purpose of God, that we should give ever-broadening life and ever-ennobling influence to truths ancient as eternity. To do this what must be our course ? It is all revealed in this instance. “ And, behold, two of them went that same day [the day when the angels had declared the resurrection] to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs [seven or eight miles]. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.” No two men ever talked about him without being joined by himself. “ Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another : and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written,” and the men became spiritual jewels to him who wrote the record. We cannot converse about Christ without Christ himself being there and taking some part in the conversation. And two men can talk better than a thousand.

“ But their eyes were holden that they should not know him”—as ours are. We know nothing as it really is. We do not see the trees of the field as they are ; we see outlines, figures, images, and we say, “ That is high, and this is low : yonder is a green tree, and here a radiant

shrub as if on fire : but what they hold, portend, mean, offer, we know nothing." No man has ever seen the full significance of his own signature. "And he said unto them,"—for he had all voices : let those who object to dramatic representation of truth fight out the battle with the Master—"And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?" The word which he used is a very graphic word : it means, "What manner of communications are these that ye throw one to another, or bandy between one another?" We seem to have a right to inquire into the cause of grief. Find two men laughing on the road, and we may not stop to ask them why, laughter invites no confidence ; laughter has a dignity on which it stands ; laughter builds itself a pedestal of sand, and elevates itself by such artificial means : let the laughers pass ; they care not for those who would inquire into their merriment. But find human beings in pain, in tears, and instantly we seem to acquire a right to say, "Why these signs of sorrow? Can we help you? Are you in any pain that we can relieve?" We may not speak to the rich man, for he has an abundance ; but the poor man by his poverty invites communication, and so the sad heart by its very distressfulness asks for speech with man. And the one of them answered and said, "What, is it possible that you do not know all about the things?" How is it that we always think people must be aware we are in trouble? How can we surrender the idea that everybody is aware what we are undergoing? Thus we enlarge ourselves and our circumstances, and are amazed because people do not know what is passing without us and within us.

"And he said unto them, What things? And they said

unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people." Jesus likes to hear how far our creed has grown. He listens with complacency, perhaps with surprise, to the statement of our budding theology. Said he in effect, "Now, how does your creed stand to-day? Read it to me." And it read thus: "Jesus of Nazareth [that is good], which was a prophet [that is good] mighty in deed and word [that is true] before God and all the people [very good : can you go further?]. But"—very well : that is like all the creeds. He does not object to the creed because it is imperfect ; he says, "That is good so far : try again : grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ : if you have got no further than that Jesus Christ was a good man, so be it ; you are on the road ; persevere, hope, pray, inquire, and ascertain the full truth." If you have come up to the confession that Jesus Christ "was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people," so let it be. We must not scorn an immature Christianity or put away men because they cannot say all that we say. "But"—how his heart went out to them when they said that historical word, that everlasting word, that plaguing word, that word that stops progress, that blurs the line so that nothing more can be written upon it. "But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel." He listened to all they had to say ; when they were done he replied, "O fools"—not a scornful term : rather, O nousless men, O men wanting in nous, sagacity, strong good sense ; there was no contempt in the word as Jesus Christ used it—"and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken" ; you are only right so far : "ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" Is there not always a blank time—blank

from a human point of view, but filled with glory from the upper position? Did he leave them there, saying, "Make the best of your case: you are ignorant, and I have no patience with you"? How we run away from the ignorant! how we will preach to the intelligent! how we comfort ourselves by saying that we love to preach to cultured and prepared and responsive audiences! Whenever there was ignorance Christ found an opportunity; and beginning at Moses he will have a long talk; for unless you commence at the beginning of things you cannot have a complete lesson.

Here is the preacher's remedy; here is the final direction. "Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them [without a Bible] in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself," and they never spoke. Secretly they said, "O voice, do not cease: was ever such music heard?" The nightingale must not interrupt this flow of music. What furtive looks they darted at him! how they secretly touched each other, expressing thus their wonder and delight! and on the mystic voice went, from paragraph to paragraph, every quotation exact, every word vital, every sentence a gleam of light, every exposition an enlarging horizon. "And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further." Their eyes were holden that they should not know him: he said, "What things?" and "he made as though he would have gone further." In what a dramatic mood he was! What a method of education he was now adopting! He touched as if he did not touch; he spoke as if he did not speak; he was near, and yet far away. But they had not had enough of him; they put their arms around him as it were, and arrested him, and said in effect, "We cannot live without

thee: 'Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.'" Any reason will do to detain those we want to keep. We would rather hasten the day, and magnify the hour and the danger, and tell them that they must stop. They spoke for us all. It is ever thus when we really hear the Son of God; we say, "Flow on, thou fountain of living water!" "And he went in to tarry with them": and the house was never so bright before; every corner of it was warm; the ceiling was heightened, the walls glowed with art such as man had never seen. "And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread"—took it by right. There are some leaderships that need not be formulated and appointed. "He took bread, and blessed it." He had broken bread not long before, and the manner was the same. Already a strange suspicion was awakened: that was just how he took it a night or two ago,—“and blessed it, and brake,”—he is doing it all over again,—“and gave to them,”—just what he did two nights since. "And their eyes were opened." That is what we want! Nothing more. We want our eyes opened: all the things to be seen are there, all the white-robed angels, all the crowned saints, all the living heaven, all the throne of God. We are victimised by our eyes; we are lost by our senses; we are poor because we have not the spiritual life—that all-appropriating power. "And they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight." Now we come to the truth. The moment they had a chance to speak to one another they said, "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?" But as the day was "far spent" and the evening was darkening, they retired to rest, saying, "We must speak of this to-morrow." That is not so. A verse or two ago the day was far spent, but something has happened. "And they rose up the

same hour," and went the whole distance, mile by mile, back again, "and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, saying, The Lord is risen indeed." The whole force of the testimony is in the word "indeed." We know it. He has inflamed our heart with heavenly ardour. He has broken bread, though we have never touched it ; to see him break it was enough. We have forgotten our hunger ; we have come to declare the Gospel.

IV.

THE APOSTOLIC "LETS."

THE word "let" is made special use of by the Apostle Paul. It is a word of command, or it is a word of persuasion, according to the sense of the passage in which it is used. The word may be so pronounced as to convey the false idea of petulance and almost fretfulness, or it may be so toned as to express entreaty and most tender desire. Two or three instances will illustrate more especially the second of these uses.

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. ii. 5). Such a word could hardly have been spoken imperatively. It quivers with the music of entreaty, as if the Apostle had said, "I beseech and implore you to cultivate the very mind and spirit of your Lord and Master: see that you do this by daily prayer and by continual exercise of the highest spiritual gifts." It is as if the Apostle would say, "Without the mind of Christ you cannot understand the doctrine of Christ, neither can you live the life of Christ. I beseech you, therefore, in the interests of your very soul, that you entertain the mind of Christ as your sovereign and abiding guest. You are in reality what you are in relation to the Saviour's mind. It is to inspire your motive, control your action, and to sanctify your temper and disposition. 'If any man have not the spirit of Christ,

he is none of his.' The name is nothing ; pretension or profession may be less than nothing ; the mind, the soul, the temper of the blessed Son of God is everything. You cannot understand his metaphysics, but you can imitate and reproduce his pureness, his pity, and his love."

"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts" (Col. iii. 15). In the Authorised Version the reading is, "Let the peace of God rule," but in the Revised Version the amended reading is, "Let the peace of Christ rule." Peace was the legacy which Jesus Christ bequeathed to his disciples. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." The word "rule," as used in this exhortation, occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, and its significance is as unique as its rarity. The passage may be paraphrased thus : "Let the peace of Christ settle all things ; let it arbitrate and decide as a referee would do in a race or contest or competition." The word "arbitrate" probably expresses the meaning as clearly as possible. The figure is vivid and memorable, being nothing less than that of an umpire who is called upon to settle rival or disputed claims. The peace of Christ is to be the umpire of the soul. The Apostle exhorts Christians to do nothing which the peace of Christ would not approve. The Apostle would say, in effect, "Do not disturb the sacred dove of Christ's own peace : whatever is inconsistent with its holy calm must be wrong, and, therefore, must be excluded from the soul." "The peace of Christ" is thus practically personalised. It becomes a living and intelligent personality in the heart. The Apostle represents it as being in authority, as being there in order that it may keep all the springs of life pure and healthy ; the sacred "peace" is to be consulted in everything, and is to save the soul amidst contending claims, and contradictory motives and desires.

The peace of Christ thus represents no less a personality than the Holy Spirit.

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Col. iii. 16). Still the Apostle is speaking with imperative gentleness, or with gentle imperativeness. Richly means abundantly. The soul is to be bathed in the steam of the divine messages ; is, indeed, to be drenched and saturated with the very spirit of the heavenly word. It is not enough to have an odd text in the memory ; the word of Christ must dwell in the heart in all the fulness of its generosity and power. The word of Christ is to be found in Holy Scripture. Not only is the word to reveal Christ, but Christ is himself to unfold and explain the word. The word of God is the light of every hope, the security of every promise, the foundation of every form of strength. Many persons have a superficial knowledge of the word ; therefore their faith is superficial, and therefore they dwell in doubt, and are harassed by inexplicable but often fatal fear.

"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory" (Phil. ii. 3). It was not enough that things should be done ; they were to be done in the right way, under the right motive, and under the happiest influences. Even right may be done in a wrong way. The right word may be spoken in a wrong tone. The right rebuke may be administered in a wrong spirit. Without saying a word the child may obey a parent's command in a manner which is spiritual disobedience. But how are we to avoid doing anything in strife and vainglory ? By the ways above named : "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus," "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts," and "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" Where the first three "lets" are in full sway there will be no difficulty about the fourth ; but vain is it above all other

hopelessness to attempt to begin obedience at the last "let" instead of at the first.

"Let no man deceive himself" (1 Cor. iii. 18). The Apostle John says, "If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves." This is the worst deception of all. One would instantly think that it is simply impossible for a man to deceive himself, and yet what we think is impossible is being done every day in the week. Men tell lies to themselves. To themselves men make false promises. When the spirit is not in right relation to God it sees everything in false light and colour. It is even possible for a man to think that he is a Christian when, in reality, he knows absolutely nothing about the spirit and temper of Jesus Christ. It was this awful possibility of self-deception that led the Apostle Paul to the following "let":

"Let a man examine himself" (1 Cor. xi. 28). The microscope is to be turned upon the soul. Every man is to pierce himself with such questions as, "Why am I doing this? Would I do it if acting in perfect secrecy? Am I doing this to make a show in the flesh, and to win an immediate though transient reputation? Am I consulting custom rather than conviction? Would I give this money if I had to deposit it in the treasury without any human eye seeing the action?" A man who will pass himself through cross-examination so severe will, by the Spirit of God, come to conclusions that may be trusted. The Apostle exhorts us not to act thoughtlessly or superficially, but after due inquiry, into the condition and motive of the soul. It was along this line of thinking that the Apostle came upon his next "let," which reads thus:

"Let every man prove his own work" (Gal. vi. 4). Thus from beginning to end the Apostle insists upon

thorough scrutiny and correct valuation of service. Every man knows whether his work is good or bad. It is mere hypocrisy to pretend that some outside critic must determine for us the value of our life-service. The Apostle would say to every soul, "You know whether your work has been done soundly or superficially ; you know exactly how much strength you have put into your work ; your work really represents your soul." The true worker puts the quality of his life into all his service ; the painter paints with his soul ; the preacher preaches with his soul ; the poet sings with his soul ; if the soul is not interested in the work, the work will assuredly crumble away, leaving no memorial. God's fire will try every man's work ; it is better, therefore, that a man should first try his own, then he will know how far it will stand the fire of the Divine criticism.

"Let not, then, your good be evil spoken of" (Rom. xiv. 16). This exhortation could only have been given by a man of carefully cultivated experience. He had been attentive to the conversation of the people by whom he was surrounded, and he had discovered to his surprise and dismay that even good things might be made the subject of taunting and bitter depreciation. But the point of this exhortation may not have reference so much to outside criticism as to inside carelessness of conduct. The good man should practise reserve in the presence of persons evil minded. "Cast not your pearls before swine." Men who cannot appreciate your piety are not unlikely to misrepresent it. "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs." It is absolutely useless to sow seed amongst stones. The prophet had something of this kind in his mind when he said, "Sow not among thorns." Never trust a bad man. He will mistake your approaches for weakness.

Your tenderest appeals he will suspect of self-seeking. He will not hesitate to say that you use your goodness as a handle to the knife with which you propose to do deeds of evil. There are many persons who do good things so unwisely as to bring discredit upon their own virtue. It is supreme wisdom to know when to speak, what to speak, and how to speak.

With all these exhortations before us, given by a man of the richest experience and of the most penetrating spiritual insight, we need have no difficulty in ascertaining the line of duty, which is always the line of privilege. The Lord grant unto us the spirit of obedience and of eager and reverent attention to all that the Lord our God may say regarding the culture and direction of our daily life.

V.

MAN AND HIS MAKER.

NO man knows God. No man hath seen God at any time. The finite can neither know nor see the infinite. No man can see the globe he lives on, except by going round it ; but no man can go round the infinite, so no man can know it.

I do not pretend to understand God. I do not even understand man : nay, I do not understand myself. Yet I believe in man's existence. I have never seen man ! No man has ever seen himself. We see a figure, an image, an attitude, an incarnation. That is all, and that is all we can see of God. He comes near to us in Jesus : he is manifest in the flesh : he is revealed. I have mystery with God, but I have despair without him. I can assume the Creator—just such a Creator as is revealed in the Bible—and yet honour and elevate the faculty of reason ; but when I exclude that assumption, reason itself is offended and deposed. Reason necessitates faith. It is because I am a rationalist that I am a believer. Reason without faith I describe under many metaphors : a bird without wings ; an earth without a sky ; the mind asleep ; an alphabet without a literature.

But how are we to prove the assumption ? Simply by working it out. By reducing it to practice. By

bringing it into daily life. That is the vital test, and that is the convincing and unanswerable test. Godliness is the proof of God. We are not dealing with fancy, a dream, a theory, or with anything that is limited to the mind, but with something that forces itself into the life, that inspires and directs the very motive and action of conduct, and that will not rest until it has wrought its own quality into the very substance of the soul. I may have opinions about the climate of the moon without those opinions affecting my sense of justice or of charity ; but I cannot believe in God as revealed in Jesus Christ without being honest and beneficent. That is the proof. Godliness is argument. We may profess to believe in God, and yet may be ungodly. So a man may profess to be a patriot, and yet in his soul may be a traitor. We cannot argue from counterfeits—on all sides they should be disregarded in the conduct of a serious argument.

In algebra we say, "Let X equal the unknown quantity." That is how we begin ; then we take in the item or two that may be known, and so we construct an equation, and go on dividing, multiplying, or subtracting, as the case may be, until we reach a solution in plain figures. Something of the same kind may be done even in religious speculation and inquiry. Then let such and such an assumption equal the unknown quantity ; then bring in the facts that are at hand—creation, life, evolution, history, and so forth ; out of all these construct an equation, and the end will be in many cases (it ought to be in all) God, Sovereignty, Law. I think that even on the ground of pure reason this course is sound and strong. It is surely scientific to take some account of the things that are round about us, and to form some judgment of their beginning, their order, and

their purpose or meaning. This I have endeavoured to do, with the result that I worship God as the Maker and Sovereign of all. Whether the heavens and the earth were created in six clock days or six geological days, whether created, as it were, by a word, or whether elaborated by evolution, I do not know, nor does it concern me much; the one way is as mysterious as the other, and as much required omnipotence in its expression. It is as difficult to account for an atom as for a planet, for a plasm as for a constellation. Those who are curious in such matters tell us that there are eight thousand seven hundred ways of changing half a crown; but that does not account for the half-crown! So there may be millions of ways of accounting for, or explaining, the development of a germ, but that does not account for the germ. What was the origin of the germ?—that is, what was the origin of what we call the creation? Tracing that origin to a tuft of fire-mist does not for a moment lessen the mystery; it may even increase it! There is, then, no need that we should settle the exact order in which creation came to be what it is; enough in the meantime that the creation is a fact, and that it is very wonderful and very grand. I see no indignity in standing still at that point. I do not, indeed, see that we can go much further. We have got no further in our study of the origin of man. What man knows how he came to be just what he is?

But if man was evolved, rather than created in the way described in the Bible, does not that give a totally different view of human origin and progress? I think not in any sense that discredits the biblical history and training of mankind. Man may have come along the whole animal line, and at some points may not have been distinguishable from the lowest of the animals, but as a

matter of fact he is distinguishable from them now, and therefore he must not be treated as if he were still one of them. Man is not a beast. At what point did he depart from the beast line? Precisely when and how did he assert his superiority and claim his dominion? Evolution has its difficulties. When did this evolved ape make a distinction between good and bad, say between obedience and disobedience? At that moment he was a man! At that moment he was made in the image and likeness of God! At that moment he fell—being too finite to be infinite! History has a moment of origin—consciousness has a day of birth. The Bible begins with man after millions of ages may have exhausted themselves upon him, and yet it looks back upon the unnumbered ages, when it traces him to “the dust,” and further back, to ages infinitely more innumerable, when it traces his “soul” to the “breath” of God! Truly man has eternity set within him! So, in my judgment, there is no need for evolution to discredit the Bible, nor is there any need to regard evolutionists as the opponents of the Christian faith. Nothing is gained—on the contrary, everything is lost—by breach of charity. Enlightened sincerity is the true orthodoxy; even if it be misdirected, it will in the end be right. In your very soul mean to be right, and you cannot permanently be far wrong.

But does not evolution seriously affect the doctrine of the incarnation? I think not. The Bible, correctly or incorrectly, never looks upon Christ's incarnation as a natural event. It is something unusual, unique, miraculous. The Bible does not shrink from the responsibility of this view. The Bible never gives it as a theory or a speculation. Upon it as upon a rock it builds its moral edifice, and challenges wind and tempest to overthrow the holy build-

ing. Why should not God be able to introduce a new factor into the action of human history? Man himself is a new factor in any theory of evolution. He stood up in the midst of his own beast equals, and in a supreme moment of consciousness claimed rightful dominion over them. What was that but an incarnation, a new departure, a miracle? That fact—the fact of man's departure from the common animal line—ought to make Christ not only possible but probable, inasmuch as Christ is not a greater miracle to man than man must have been to the lower animals, could they have expressed themselves in terms of human thought and estimate. So I think of man himself as an incarnation, coming after countless ages of development. In speaking of what is distinctively known as the incarnation—the in-fleshing of the Word—I see in it an illustration of what is going on every day; for every day the usual is passing into the unusual, and the commonplace is becoming the unique. We have been so long accustomed to think of the unique becoming the commonplace that we may be startled at an inversion of the process; startled at the thought that the infinitely great and the infinitely little are parts of one another; startled that the telescope is, so to say, only the microscope turned the other way. Who could think that law and mercy co-exist in the same creation? Mercy does not set aside law, but it may provide for it an atmosphere, and, indeed, may set it within a specific environment. Certainly this may be the case in social law; though mercy does not abolish social law, it modifies the conditions under which law has to operate, it softens men, it touches the springs which ennoble and sanctify personal character, it opens new possibilities and new horizons to the men whom it awakens to new hope. But as to physical law—is not that beyond the possibility of change? I do not know. Probably no

man knows. But the answer is that, after all, it is only physical law ; that is to say, it is law at its most elementary and least important point. The law of body is one thing ; the law of mind is another. The infinite extension of a point is a very trifling matter compared with the awakening of responsibility or bringing of every thought and every act under the control of conscience. We may have made far too much of the physical. We may have been imposed upon by bigness. Disastrously we may have made the material the standard and measure of the spiritual. We must not confuse the words—gravitation is one thing, sympathy is another. When we enter the mysterious world in which incarnation, redemption, atonement, prayer are amongst the principal conceptions and assumptions, we need more than a foot-rule, and something more than a scientific apparatus. Even in physical examinations and comparisons we need adaptation of instruments ; we do not make astronomical observations through a sheet of blotting-paper, nor do we examine animalculæ through a telescope. Ought we not to be equally careful in our choice of instruments in examining and estimating phenomena that are ultra-physical ? Suppose a man should demur to Euclid because he has found no propositions and theorems in Homer, the answer would be that he was not likely to find them there. Nor are men likely to find a doctrine of prayer in the study of zoology, or a doctrine of the incarnation in the study of chemistry. These illustrations do not take us one step from the inquiry—whether the incarnation of God is not made impossible by the law of evolution ? Evolution deals with the physical, with the knowable, and with the finite ; religion deals with the spiritual, the moral, the infinite. Their respective spheres may be profitably used for mutual and partial illustration, but between them is a great gulf, which should

impose restraint upon curiosity and moderate the audacity of ignorance.

My position, then, is substantially this :

1. There is a point, which cannot be defined as to time, when a certain creature became what is now known as man, became intelligent, moral, responsible.

2. That, rising into a higher identity, may be fitly described in the Bible terms : "God made man in his own image."

3. By some means man became a wrongdoer. The proof of that is around us and within us every day. Wrongdoing brought loss, degradation, suffering, fear, which are the very consequences that wrongdoing brings now.

4. God himself interposed with a view to rectification, and, according to the Scriptures, he interposed by what is known as the method of in-fleshing or incarnation ; God became man ; God dwelt with man, descended to his lower state, took upon him the nature of man ; God showed himself in the person and ministry of Jesus Christ ; Jesus Christ was Emmanuel, "God with us."

This conception I gratefully adopt as being pre-eminently in agreement with reason. As surely as I can see an upward movement in evolution, so I see a movement of condescension in incarnation. If man may go up, why may not God come down ? Whatever God does must, on his part, be an act of condescension—a contraction of infinity ! I am far from saying that this conception is clear of mystery ; on the contrary, it is surrounded by mystery. But what other conception escapes the presence of mystery ? To my mind there is less mystery about this conception than about any other : this conception

invites reason to fly ; every other conception compels reason to grovel. Besides, where reason ends faith begins. Without mystery there could be no faith, and without faith the highest reverence and the most comforting expectation are impossible. If reason is the landscape, faith is the sky : the one measurable, manageable, secular ; the other immeasurable, beyond mechanical control, ineffable. Of course there are many questions I should like to ask. There are many challenges I must decline. There are steeps and abysses from which I must turn away in terror. I must, however, repeat as to the incarnation what I have already said of God : with this doctrine I have mystery, without it I am plunged in despair. I hail Jesus as my Lord and my God—my Saviour !

PRAAYER

ALMIGHTY FATHER, we are thine, for thou hast made us in thine own image and in thine own likeness. Thou wilt not forsake the work of thine own hands ; that which thou hast begun thou wilt surely continue and complete. The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof ; thou shalt make a garden of the wilderness, dry bones shall live, and the desert shall be full of pools of water. Thou alone art Almighty ; our strength is derived from thy power : continue, we humbly pray thee, to increase our energy day by day, until we can do the whole task of life with ease and pleasure and singing joy. Thou art conducting us in thine own way, by difficulty, by hardship, by loss, by disappointment, by joy, delight, and riches, and prosperity ; in all ways thou art bringing us to the measure of the stature of Christ, that we may be perfect men in thy presence, rejoicing all the day in thy salvation. We humbly beseech thee that we may have grace, through our Lord Jesus Christ, not to take our lives into our own hands and into our own keeping, but to leave them entirely at thy disposal ; for thou knowest all things. Thy name is Love, thy heart is love, and if we live and move and have our being in God, thou wilt surely perfect us in holiness and strength. We would now renounce our own will, we would cast it away and reject it utterly, as having misled us in the days that are gone. At the foot of the Cross we would assume the will of Christ, we would give ourselves over wholly to his ruling, remembering that by the grace of the Eternal Spirit he may dwell in us, and direct us, and inspire us day by day, making us strong in battle, patient in suffering, hopeful in all the cloud and darkness of time's night. The Lord hear us in these things, the Lord hear us in heaven his dwelling-place ; and when thou hearest, Lord, forgive ! Amen.

VI.

THE VISION OF DRY BONES.

EZEK. xxxvii. 1-10.

“THE hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones.” “The hand of the Lord”—a manifold poetry. That hand “carried me out in the spirit of the Lord”: the hand is the spirit, and the spirit is the hand. The hand of the Lord is full of power. It is a wonderful hand; it moulds all things, it carries all things; it directs the ways of men; it opens all doors; it points in all heavenly directions. There is no reason why we should regard it as historical only. That hand is available to-day. God can now lay his hand upon us, and direct us in all the process and issue of our pilgrimage. By the banks of the Chebar Ezekiel saw visions of God. All men do not see visions. Men may have eyes, but see not; ears, but hear not; hearts, but may not understand. Do not imagine that because you have eyes you can see. You can see some things; you can see external conditions and relations, but only a man here and there, burning as Ezekiel, winged like Isaiah, glowing seraphically like Jeremiah, can see the inner and upper side of things; and only such a man here and there has the gift of bright, burning speech by which he can express to other men somewhat of what has passed within the sanctuary of his own consciousness, and over the hills and whole scenery of his own personal daily experience. Vision is not reason: but vision may be the higher truth: fiction may be fact at its best, and

fact can only be properly and fully interpreted by fiction—that is, by the high, religious, spiritual imagination ; not the fancy that creates mere images, but the imagination that interprets and transliterates into human speech the wisdom and the purpose of God.

“Son of man, can these bones live?” The Bible always challenges us with great questions. The Bible humbles us by catechism ; the Bible excites our intellectual energy and activity. The Bible does not put before us little, trivial, transient questions. “Can these bones live?” They are the bones of slaughtered men ; they are not anatomical forms, but bones here, and bones there, and bones far apart. Can they be brought together and shaped again? What is the answer? Ezekiel returned the only proper reply : “I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest.” Why do we not rest in that declaration? Why do we set ourselves to answer problems that lie infinitely beyond our capacity? Why attempt to measure the possible by our energy and intellectual virility? Why not say, “There are some things my poor strength cannot do ; I am only of yesterday’s age, and to-morrow I shall have gone like a post across the mountains ; the Lord himself abideth, he knows the beginning, and the process, and the end, and in his omnipotence and all-goodness I rest”? That consideration would put you into a new state and invest you with a new joy of life. Let God answer his own questions. God must answer his own prayers. You must not suppose that God answers your prayers. God himself first inspires the prayer, and then answers it—as he must. God himself first teaches us how to pray, and then he answers our desire. If we pray otherwise, without being divinely taught, we get no reply, and in the absence of a reply we shrivel and shrink into sceptics. And as with

the prayer, so with the answer. "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord God, thou knowest." He who sets the enigma keeps the answer; he who provides the lock has the key at his girdle. Do not imagine that because we are short of answers to God's questions, that therefore God cannot answer his own interrogations. That is my point of rest. Can man live again? I do not know: "O Lord God, thou knowest." The tree lives again, why not the man? The summer comes back again, why not our youth? But if thou dost say to me, "Can man live again?" I answer, "O Lord God, thou knowest"; he is thine, thou didst make him, his issue is in thine hand, I can only bow before thy throne and say, "Thy will be done." Is there an unseen world? I do not know: "O Lord God, thou knowest." All I can know is by revelation; I cannot invent an unseen world, I cannot dream one and trust to it; I can only build my life upon revelation; revelation I believe I have found in the Holy Scriptures; they are my authority for the whole range and gamut of my faith. I therefore abide strongly and serenely on the basis of what I accept as divine revelation about the unseen world. Do the dead visit the living? I do not know: "O Lord God, thou knowest." I hope they do; I want them to come, I often pray for the touch of a vanished hand and the sound of a voice that is still. I do not see why they should not come; thou canst permit them, thou canst direct them; why should they not come and help my poor frail life at a thousand points of necessity and wonder and desire? But I have no answer; it is not in me to answer such wondrous questions: "O Lord God, thou knowest." Enough, enough!

Again he said unto me, "Prophecy upon these bones." Do something, but do it at my bidding. All private

prophesying is futile, pithless, and is never followed by resurrection. Ezekiel received the command of God : " Say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord." The only word they could hear ; they could not hear my voice, they are beyond my argument and my entreaty. But who shall say what is beyond the argument and the entreaty of the divine voice ? I know not to what depths that voice may go, to what heights it may ascend, whether it may travel through all the dark Hadean regions where the lost are, whether it may go beyond the triumph-song of heaven, go where other miracles and greater wonders are realised : " O Lord God, thou knowest." It seems to me, from my point of view, that to prophesy to these dead bones is folly, but I am not a judge of wisdom. I will not be measured and bounded by my own little judgments, which I can convict already of a thousand mistakes ; I will not be self-bounded ; my vanity and pride of intellect shall not make a prisoner or a victim of me ; I will live in the great world of faith, imagination, hope, sympathy, religious sensitiveness ; and I will not be surprised by thy greatness, O God ; nothing could surprise me in thee but want of love and want of power.

Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones, " Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live ; and I will lay sinews upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live ; and ye shall know that I am the Lord." There are no little and withering speeches in the Bible ; these are great trumpet-blasts of power. Why should we take our compasses and describe little circles, and say within these particular circumferences everything knowable is classed and ranged ? A circle has an outside as well as an inside ; beware lest your little self-drawn circles exclude everything and include

nothing. God's speeches are hopeful, optimistic, resurrectional. "I will make the wilderness blossom as the rose; I will find springs of water in desert places; I will point out honey hidden in the rock." These are the great prophecies and speeches of God. O Church of Christ, have a great faith, a sublime expectancy; do not drive out and fray away a life that might be consolidated in the omnipotence of God, and that might bloom with all the beauty and hopefulness of Christ's own peace and majesty.

The Lord bids us do strange things. There is nothing more absurd, viewed from a merely human point, than to preach the Cross. It hath pleased God by the foolishness of the thing preached—not by the foolishness of preaching, but by the foolishness of the thing preached, the Cross, grim, gory, ghastly, horrible—it hath pleased God by the foolishness of the thing preached to save the world and remake it, and set heaven in the midst of its tumult. To many a preacher God says concerning his hearers, "Can these dry bones live?' Can these worldly spirits pray? can these men who have wasted their life in debauchery and wickedness and all manner of horrible iniquity ever fall down upon their knees and vehemently and effectually pray to God?" And the bewildered preacher says, "'O Lord God, thou knowest': if thou dost bid me prophesy, I will preach again to these same dead bones; I loathe the sight of them, but if I have to prophesy by thy bidding, prophesy I will, and out of the prophecy I shall expect great resurrections." That is the confidence of the preacher, the teacher, the leader, the parent, the man or woman put in charge of great responsibilities. These stewards of prophecy are not called upon to look at themselves, for then, verily, their hearts would faint,

and they would fall away in the trouble of a great dismay ; they are called upon to look at the Gospel, at the Word, at the Divine Spirit, at the Eternal Power ; and, looking at life from these high centres, miracles become common-places, death is abolished, the grave filled up, the flowers growing through and through it. If you would not be dismayed, take Ezekiel's standpoint : " O Lord God, thou knowest."

" So I prophesied as I was commanded." There is the preacher's power. If a preacher be reading or speaking to me something of his own invention, I have not time to listen to it ; I do not want his brilliant futility ; I cannot wait to hear his pithless, sapless words ; but if he be a strong, true, tender man, who has tasted of the things of life and handled them, and who would detain me with some message direct from God, I gladly halt, I must not haste when the King would speak to me. So I prophesy, hopelessly enough, despairingly enough. I was a fool to all who looked on ; they said, in effect, " Ezekiel is mad to-day, he is shouting to dry bones ; not a bone in all the valley can hear his voice." And such judgment would be based upon natural reason ; it would seem to have a very strong justification in fact. But Ezekiel continues, " I prophesied as I was commanded." That is our authority as preachers, teachers, readers of the higher mysteries, interpreters of the higher dreams that lie quite near the visions of the heavens. We do things because we are commanded : preaching is obedience. Preaching is not invention ; it is submission to the divine will, and a repronunciation of divine words. The Lord takes the responsibility of the issue upon himself. Saith he, " My Word shall not return unto me void ; it shall accomplish the thing whereto I sent it." That is our reason for

believing that the heathen shall be saved. They are promised to the living Christ ; he shall have them for a possession. Why will all the world be converted? Because there are clever ministers and able missionaries? No. Why will the world be made beautiful and fragrant as the garden of God? Because the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it ; that is our authority, that our vindication, that our hope. If we could give up that authority, then we should be weak as other men, our voices would be but tricks in wind, without power, without force to penetrate deaf ears and bring dead and deaf souls into sensitiveness and responsiveness before God.

Ministers do not make their own sermons. A minister has no business to be building up a merely literary essay. A minister is not a mechanical writer. A minister does not need any pen and ink in his highest functions when he has on him his singing-robcs, and when the Lord God Almighty is communing with him in the valley or on the mountain. He has then nothing to do with classical English and polished periods and flowing rhetoric and cumulative argument ; these are the mechanics of the pulpit. What the soul has to do is to wait diligently and fervently upon God ; then let the words come, they will not be man-chosen, but divinely given, and sometimes with rough power and sometimes with tender, suasive energy they will find their way into the listening souls, and Christ shall see the blossoming of his Cross. The poet does not make his own poems. You can easily tell where the man made it ; it is so mechanical, it is so slow-moving, it is so earth-bound, and utterly sordid and grovelling : but when real poetry is heard, it is something between a thought and a thing, something between a felt power of the soul and an outward image ; something spiritually

charming, something that speaks the native tongue of our soul. We hear in the poet's highest music the translation of our mother-tongue. And so with prophets and their prophecies. The prophets knew nothing oftentimes of what they were saying. They wondered; they heard of the sufferings of Christ, and they could not interpret such agony and blood; they knew not what they said; they were uplifted, carried away in high vision, and they fell from that great exaltation into common men again, and wondered what they had spoken in the hour of their trance and dream. We must have men of this kind in the Church. They will not always be understood, they will not always understand themselves; it will indeed be matter of small concern to them whether they understand themselves, for they are conscious that they are speaking the very command and word of God: then they will say to their souls, "Hold not back, but speak the very word, rough, beautiful, refined, tender, tremendous; for the fiery volcano is God's, as well as the silver rill that trickles down the green or flowery bank."

If the prophet has lost his mantle and lost his soul, I blame the people. The people could have great preaching if they wanted it. Only the people can lift the pulpit back to its own regnancy, when, by the word and spirit of the living God, it was a fact and a force in the land. If you want to be amused and titillated, and if you want to have some soft, smooth, lying things said to you, if you want to be hugged in your wickedness, if you want to be rocked into soul slumber, that you may the more energetically pursue evil, you will drag down the pulpit, you will drag down the holiest Ezekiel that ever spake. You must demand bread, life, light, judgment, teaching; when you rise in the massiveness of your strength with

that high demand, the pulpit will answer you with its old vigour and its completest inspiration.

But are there not great souls that are crying in the wilderness without any response? There are not: no great soul is wasted; God will see to the issue and the reward. There may be apparent failure, there may be to the outward seeming no reply to the great appeal, the searching, yearning importunity; the people may seem to go away just as they came; but such will not be really the case: God will not let any holy influence be lost; it may not fructify in the way which we anticipate or desire, but it will be brought to fruit by the great Husbandman. Be sure you are speaking the word of God and not the word of man, and leave the issue. Ezekiel alone could prophesy, God must do the rest. Be thou faithful, my soul, in the divine gift of prophesying, teaching, interpreting, revealing the will of thy Master, and leave the issue to him, and he will justify his ways to men.

And then, behold, the sinews and the flesh came upon the bones, and the skin covered them: "but there was no breath in them." That was the first miracle. We ourselves may be now at that stage of this resurrectional work. The anatomy may be complete, we may at this moment be but frameworks and nothing more; there is no breath in some of us yet. But do not despair; you are at the altar, you have a desire to know something about the open book of the divine will: so far so good; that is the first aspect and instalment of the miracle. "Then said he unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So

I prophesied as he commanded me,"—the old spirit, the true spirit, the only spirit in which miracles can be wrought,—“and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.” Some of you may be in the position of the second miracle ; you have got your breath, your souls are alive, and you are standing up for God ; do not despair, and do not condemn those who are only in the first stage of the miracle , your breath was not given you to censure those who are less advanced than you are ; your breath was given you to encourage others, and not to deter. Who can limit the spiritual ? Can these cemeteries be filled with the lives of those that sleep in them ? “O Lord God, thou knowest.” The resurrection is a divine secret and a divine miracle. It is not in my power to do it, and it ought not to be within my desire to deny it. So long as God is omnipotent, I will not limit his energy. Can our environment be changed ? Can those of us who were born in lowliest conditions of the flesh be made kings and priests and princes unto God ? Can princes come out of the dunghill and mighty men out of conditions of weakness ? “O Lord God, thou knowest.” Who can fix the issues of any action ? who can fix the issues of the decrees of God ? What is our hope amid the dry bones, the shattered fortunes, the fatal diseases, the moral pestilences that fill the air ? Is our hope in our own genius ? That has failed us a thousand times. Are we to look to statesmanship ? Statesmanship is but an invention of men. To what are we to look in the time of weakness and fear and despair ? To the word of the living God—the power of heaven—the promise of the Eternal.

VII.

THINGS THAT SHALL BEFALL ME.

“And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there.”—ACTS xx. 22.

“**T**HAT is to say, things that shall happen to me : accidents, misadventures, insults, dishonours, coronations, joys, miseries. I do not know anything about them ; in what order they may come I cannot tell ; some of them may never come ; I will not think about them ; but, come what may, weal or woe, I will certainly go.” Here is a certain determination in presence of an uncertain issue. The Apostle said of himself and of his brethren, “Unknown, yet well known.” That is exactly what we may say of the future. It is unknown ; no man hath seen to-morrow. “Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.” Yet it is well known : all the great incidents have occurred, and can only repeat themselves. Death has outworn his novelty, and is now amongst us as a commonplace.

If we turn this thought over we shall see how full of reality and suggestiveness it is. We have the great promise that summer and winter, seedtime and harvest, day and night, shall not cease. So far the future is known ; yet no man can tell what the weather will be to-morrow night and the day after ; whether the harvest next year

shall be a heap and autumn a day of desperate sorrow, or whether the corn shall stand so thick in the valleys that all nature shall laugh and sing as at some innocent riot, some sacred revel. That is exactly how the case stands all through and through life. You know you will die ; you cannot tell when : in the high summer or in the cold winter—as the sun comes back like a resurrection hint, or as it dies, the end of human hope. How wise is man ! how abject in ignorance !

Something will befall us all. The miracle never ceases. Continuity is a miracle, perpetualness is a great sign from heaven ; yet so basely have we lived that we have called it monotony ! Continuity, which is an aspect of the divine throne, has sunk into a weariness to human flesh. Thus are we all prodigals ; thus do we all wastefully throw away our fathers' inheritance and the riches of our ancestors. We say, " Things go on as usual." So they do : but what is " usual " ? Only the miracle. The drama is inside the commonplace ; the usual is the shell, the kernel is God. We have dwarfed and abbreviated our life into " as usual." Who can beat a fool into philosopher ? who can pound idiocy into wisdom ? None. You may bray any fool in a mortar, and he comes out as he went in. " Befall "—why, it is not a term of accident or haphazard ; it is a note in music ! " Befall "—" Attach itself to me ; become a part of the rhythm of movement, swell the procession, the retinue behind me which I call my daily life. I cannot tell what shall be found behind, before, on the right, on the left ; I cannot tell, but I will go ! " Paul was always heroic. He lifted up every occasion into a sublimity ; he never belittled any situation ; as danger increased his heroism expanded. He was never to be deterred ; you could sooner stop a lion than turn back that more than lion heart.

It was full of the spirit of Christ ; the very virtue of the Christ dwelt in it, and made it strong. He who has seen Calvary can see sorrow no more. Some visions extinguish all other spectacles.

What was the secret of this man's calmness in presence of the unknown? It was that ever-during, ever-growing faith. He said, "My life is now faith ; it used to be a pharisaic ritual ; I used to do certain things in certain order and sequence, and think that my *rôle* of piety was thereby completed. I was mechanical, literal, servile ; I always had to consult the book as to what I ought to do next ; but now the life that I live in the flesh I live by faith on the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me, and by that very love and gift has pledged himself to see me safely through to-morrow." To-morrow kills many a man before it is born. To-morrow is the tyrant of souls that are in bondage. To-morrow whips and scourges those who fear it into the pit with all its bottomlessness and darkness. Is there a future? Strange enough, the future is always present ; yet it is always future. Thus are we mocked ; thus the spirit of the air gibes us, chatters at us, shakes some spectral influence before our faces, and says, "You are here, you are there, you are between the two points ; you see you are blind ; this is to-day, this is to-morrow." Yet we thought all mystery was in the sacred books ; we presumed to say that if there were no church there would be no intellectual difficulty, no metaphysical perplexity—all would be as simple as a straight line and open as a visible and measurable surface. It is a lie ! All things are mysterious. No man can stoop down and take up his own shadow. There are notes which we cannot bring into harmony with our own. When we think we are alone we are startled by some unexpected vibration.

There is never so much noise of a vexing and tormenting kind as when the house is shut up and given into the care of midnight. All things then talk ; every piece of furniture is a coffin out of which some dead thing comes to chatter and creak. Yes, there is a future, and it colours to-day. There is a future, a million miles, a million centuries, away ; and there is another future that almost mingles with the breath we are now breathing. It is a strange world ! There must be some dominant God or ruling devil.

We must work for the future. All men are doing it, consciously or unconsciously, religiously or atheistically. The future is more potent than the present. What makes me sow this seed ? The future. Why write this book ? For readers unborn. Why build this house ? why not have reared a little shell that would last a little life ? Because of the generations that are to come. We are impelled thus, whether we will or not. Sometimes we rise into our larger selfhood and say, "Time will judge us, the future will pronounce who is right and who is wrong." Some men we hand over to history to be measured, weighed, appraised, and set up on appropriate pedestals. They are too big for the little grey day we call the present.

Seeing that there is a future, and that we must work for it, let us work in a spirit of dependence. It is sad to think that the artist may never finish his picture. "Then, fool, why paint it ?" He says, "That is a fool's question." It is sad to think that ere the topstone be brought on, the architect and the builder may both be buried. Then, why have planned so huge a thing ? We plan for time. But, see, life is so uncertain : let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die. How then ? We cannot ; our own philosophy breaks down. Whatever is foolish in its heart deceives,

disappoints, and mocks us: our own creed will not live the night. Whatever is untrue dies in the night-time, and on the morrow we have to bury it, or let it lie in the open that it may poison the fresh air. But some, here and there, can eat and drink and die to-morrow. Certainly; they are the exceptions. If they are not the exceptions within a very limited time, they will be the exceptions when time has rolled out her scroll and the present economy has completed itself in all its four corners. This may not be the time for taking the vote; but the Spirit saith in divers ways, "In the end, wisdom has it," and folly has gone down to darkness. Do not count suddenly, impatiently, unseasonably.

The future is known to God. That is enough. Does he know to-morrow? Why, dear heart! to God there is no to-morrow. How dwells he? In one eternal NOW. Hath he beginning? Yes. Its name? Everlasting. Ending? Yes. Its name? Everlasting. Hence the great voice of history, "From everlasting to everlasting thou art God." We need this faith to complete our own; we need the sky to make the earth of any use; we need the higher religion, the diviner outlook, the mysterious apocalypse of faith, in order to grow the little flowers that give colour to our own doorsill.

You cannot bow down yourself and lay in the earth and find what you want. Why do you not go out at midnight with your spade and delve in the clay? You tell me it is because you cannot see. But what is it that takes away your sight? You say, "There is no light in the sky." But what do you want with a sky when you are going to sow roots and fruits in the earth? Then your face brightens, and you tell me that it is the sky that lures out of the clay, and out of the sand, the roots and

the fruits that are buried there in bulb and seed. It is even so in life : we need God to complete man. God created man, and when God retires the creation goes back into nothingness and mockery.

Let us leave our lives in God's hands. We can only do so by living in the life of Christ, by breathing the very soul of the Son of God. We must be meddling : we are not great enough to be calm. We have just enough faith to torment ourselves with doubts. We have not the greater faith, the blessed view that brings Sabbath into the soul and the lull of ineffable tranquillity into all the recesses and issues of the life. We have just theology enough to doubt its own existence—faith enough to take the Bible to pieces and quarrel with its structure. We have so outlived our faith that now we actually apply an anatomical term to our acting within the Bible, and we say we are going to *dissect* the book. You can never dissect a soul. In the dissecting-room you find the icy flesh, the dead bones : the fancy hath fled.

Jesus Christ always spake of the future in great breadths, He did not speak of it by the clock, as who should say, "To-morrow, when the clock striketh noon, this and that shall happen." He said, "Hereafter." Great speakers use great words. The greatest of all historians said, "IN the beginning God created " The one Saviour of the world says, "Hereafter," the endless, dateless time. Speaking of the future in great breadths, Christ always spake hopefully. Christ was no pessimist ; Christ never saw only the dark side of things ; Christ was never known to come upon a poor cripple and say, "Nothing can do thee good ; this will be a case of continual depletion of strength, and by-and-by—a mere matter of educated guessing : it may be twelve months or eighteen—your

life will give way. This is what I have to say to thee, poor sufferer!" Never! That is the distinction between Christianity and all the fine theories that have set up competition with it. What can be made of this sterile clay? "A garden," saith Christ. It is so cold! "The sun can warm it." What about this publican, tax-gatherer, chief of the robbing crew? "He also is a son of Abraham." What about this thief on the cross who is trying to pray? "He shall find his 'Amen' in heaven." What is the outlook? "The fields are white unto the harvest." So said all the minstrels and the prophets. The gazers upon the months and centuries afar off said, "He shall have the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession." These were words of emotion; these words expressed the soul at its best; these utterances are the poetry of the ages. "He must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." A dart is already uplifted that shall smite that pale monster and overthrow him for ever.

How can we happily affect the future? In two ways. First, by using the present well. Fill up the page to the last line; use the sun to the final beam; tire out the light. What little talent you have, make the most of it. If it is so very little, then you cannot afford to neglect it. If you had fifty talents, you might neglect some of them; but you say your talent is so little. Then I answer, "You must take the more care of it, and nourish it, and keep it alive, and feed it by beneficent activity, by kindly service, and all the ministry of love, and that little one talent of yours may some day be two. Then shall a voice come from high heaven, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things: I will make thee

ruler over many things.' Keep your house clean ; keep your stable like a picture ; brighten the boot until it shines again ; light the lamp so as not to set fire to aught beside it ; feed the lamp with needful oil ; watch the door, for the thief also is a watchman, and he may outwatch thee ; ask God to keep open the eyes of thy vigilance. And if the talent be great, thank God for it, and let the greatness of your talent be the measure of your modesty." And, secondly, we can happily affect the future by lovingly trusting God. If God had not had any experience we might have distrusted him ; but if I look into my own life I see how unwise I should have been to have trusted myself. There have been times when one might have become an atheist with some outward propriety and show of reason. When that wall fell down, when there was no water in the well, when summer never settled on the tree branches and sang them into leaves and blossoms and fruit, and when we had loss after loss, and had to fill up the grave almost to the line of prohibition, one might then have sat down and said, "There is no God." But the morrow came, and the day after, and the third day came. The third day always brings resurrection, the third day is the singing day, the third day is harvest and festival time. Then we saw how it was, and how, if it had been otherwise, all life would have been twisted into some grotesqueness, and would have resulted in bitterness and disappointment and mockery. Believe God ; leave the future in his hands ; take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. By "thought" understand over-anxiety, atheistic care, worry that devours the heart. Take no thought of the morrow ; do not feed the cancer. Believe God. It will be well with thee in the end. In the end—aye, in the end !

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we bless thee for the Sabbath day ; a time of rest, and of the higher thought, and of the tenderest love. Thou hast given us many days, every day is New Year's day ; birthday ; wedding day day of joy ; memory of grief, yet brightened with heaven's gladness. May we know the meaning of every morning and rise to its music. We bless thee for all things that remind us of thy love, thy care, thy tenderness. Behold thou dost bless the tree of the field, and none can blight it ; thou dost fill the orchard with fruits, and none can disappoint the hunger of thy creatures. All things are in thy hand, and if thou didst not spare thine own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shalt thou not with him also freely give us all things ? What canst thou withhold when thou hast emptied thine heart ? We have come to muse upon things heavenly ; to turn away from things that are of time, transient, and to look upon the things of eternity ; calm because eternal. We would quiet ourselves with the repose of thine own spirit. Keep us from anxiety, vexation, and tormenting memory. Give us one hour's release from the world, the flesh, the devil, that we may see ourselves in thy life, and see our own life in its proper figure and proportion. Thou knowest how prone we are to think that the near is the great, that the present is the important. May we measure things by the standard of the sanctuary. May we weigh all things in the balance of heaven, the golden scales that make no mistake. We bless thee for the body, that wonder of thine ! How wondrously and fearfully hast thou made the body ! and in it thou hast put the soul, the spirit, the mind, the reason, the divine intelligence. We are thy workmanship, created in Jesus Christ ; thou hast promised that when the body of this humiliation shall drop away we shall have a spiritual body like unto our souls, and we shall be for ever with the Lord, where there is no more crying, neither sickness nor death, neither shall there be any more pain ; for thou wilt give to each soul a body after its own kind, and it shall be free of all limitations and sorrows of time. For

these great hopes and assurances how can we thank thee? Our souls would break their chain, and even now would bathe themselves in the light of heaven's morning. We are sure that if we believe in Christ we cannot die, and that they who are dead in Christ shall rise again and be alive in him for evermore, clothed in the house that is from heaven, breathing a body which is full of spirit, a wondrous tabernacle of which this framework is but a poor emblem. We bless thee for our relation to things material; we bless thee that we know the spirit, and hail the coming of the vernal spirit, and regard that spirit as a herald and harbinger of still brighter things, even things heavenly. We bless thee for the spirit that multiplies love, socialising all hearts and bringing them into the masonry of Christ's own love. We bless thee for one another, for we have comforted each other's life, the one has been a brother to the other, and all have felt the inspiration of a common life in Christ, in the cross, in the blood that made atonement for sin. We therefore come with a united hymn, a great growing psalm, musical as the thunder of the sea; and we would praise thee with a loud voice, and worthily magnify thy name, thou Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Our petitions are many; every soul has its own sorrow; every heart its own peculiar prayer; every life has something of its own to say to thee. Oh! stoop, condescend, lend us the ear of thy attentive love, while, without words, every soul pours its grief into the hearing of thy heart. The Lord send us away from this house glad that we came to it. Here may we find peace, rest, hope, joy, and comfort, because here we find the cross, sweet Calvary, all the wonders of redeeming love, and here we see the open grave, and hear the angels say unto us, "He is not here, he is risen," go, find him, and lo! the risen one is near at hand bringing us breath of heaven, perfume from the upper gardens, and joys and hopes not born of earth. Raise up amongst us good men and women who will be baptised for the dead. Thou hast taken away the great, and noble, and beautiful, the apostles of light and the angels of love. Leave us not altogether; out of the cradle and out of the nursery do thou bring those who shall carry our life to still higher levels. The Lord pity us! One tear of thy love will help us to bear all sorrow; one tender sigh from heaven will dissolve the burden under which we groan. Oh! come to us, seeing we pray at the cross of Jesus, in the power of the blood of Jesus; if we mention his name we have already received thy answer. Amen.

VIII.

THINGS TOO HIGH.

"Things too high for me."—PSALM cxxx. i.

IT is something to know that there are such things. To know that well is to be wise. We are not all equally able. All men are not equal. To know this is one of the secrets of power. Blessed is the man who knows what he cannot preach. That knowledge will spare him many a fruitless effort. All men may learn something from this doctrine. The public speaker can ; the teacher may ; the statesman may. What is one of the secrets of power? It is to keep within your own ability ; you can describe a circle six feet in circumference, but not seven feet. To know that is true wisdom. To know that I cannot write the *Iliad* saves me time ; it amounts to a revelation ; it guides, limits, chastens my ambition. To know that you are not a statesman is half the battle of life. God has not put the flame of statesmanship within you, nor the flame of poetry, nor the flame of music. It is when people are trying to be and to do what the divine election never intended them to be or to do that they are foolish and weak, and life ends in futility. To know this and to do it would remodel our whole life. Suppose we could say to one another with all the frankness of Christian confidence and love, "Dear sir, you are not a singer, you are not a painter, you are not a preacher, you are not a genius," how much time would be saved ! how much real work might be done ! what a very different aspect would be put upon social affairs ! In this psalm we have a man who knows that he cannot reach beyond

a certain point. What does he say? He says he will not exercise himself in matters that are too high for him ; he will not be too great a theologian, he will not undertake to put his little arms around the circle of infinity. He can plough well, and sow well, and do a very great amount of useful work ; but he cannot grasp infinity. He can revere and wonder and pray and serve and help ; but he cannot carry the universe. We are not held responsible for those things we cannot do. If you cannot pray, you will not be held responsible for praying ; if you cannot live a noble life, God will not expect it from you ; if he has sent you into this world absolute imbeciles, he will not expect you to be geniuses. Where much is given, much will be required ; where little is given, little will be expected ; where nothing is given, nothing can be returned. Now say to yourself what you have, what power is yours, and be faithful to it. That is life ; that is honour.

Look at this little word "me." For a moment let us put aside all merely grammatical accuracy, and talk of *me*, and here is *me* rebuked. A voice seems to say, "Not so high ; you are trying to stretch an inch higher than you can stretch ; be quiet." *Me* so great, so huge, so commanding, so royal, so majestic ! and a voice says, "Keep your own place ; you are not a singer, you are not a preacher, you are not a leader ; your business in life is to be silent." *Me* rebuked ! and I fill as much space of an arithmetical kind as any other *me*, yet I am to stand here and see a thousand men passing me singing, preaching, painting, leading, governing nations, commanding armies, and I am appointed to stand and see the great procession. Yes, that is your place ; do it and all its duty well, and it shall be well with thee. Here is *me* interfered with ; I think I could govern better than sundry other men, and lead with

greater sagacity and certainty to positions of success and honour ; I do not like the way things are being done by other men, I could amend them every one ; and yet a voice says to me, " Silence ! " We are educated when we are rebuked, and when we accept the rebuke in a spirit of docility and thankfulness. You thought you would go forth and lead the hosts, and God said, " Go home and tend the flock." If you went home you went a wise man's journey.

But here is "*me*" also encouraged. There are some things I can reach ; there are some things I can fetch from the field, from the well, from the house ; I will run for them and bring them to you. Now you speak wisely ; now you will be blessed in your labour. What can you do ? The infinite mischief is that we always want to do something we cannot do. That was the first temptation ; that is the devil's blackest, inmost lie : " Be as gods ! " think you can sing and preach and paint and lead and govern ; think you are the very wisest man under the sun. Thus we outstretch ourselves and burst and perish. You can reach a draught of water for poor thirsty lips ; reach it : even that may be an angel's work. You can lead a blind man across the road when the thoroughfare is very thronged ; do it, and the work shall be spoken of in heaven ; it shall be blessed. What I have to settle therefore is : What are the things I cannot reach ? what are the things I can reach ? what are the things God meant me to handle, control ? and let me accept my election.

And there are things too high for the highest of us. Blessed be God for that ! If we could rake the heavens it would be to our sorrow and to our loss. We are trained by mystery. What is this ? I will turn aside and see this great sight : why the bush burns with fire and is not

consumed ! That is education ; to stop there in the right spirit, and to ask and wonder and pray and wait is to be trained for higher service. The man who watches that burning bush well is being educated for leadership.

Who can understand the mysteries of Providence ? They are too high for me. Here is a soul all purity, all white as snow, and yet God seems to frown upon that poor life more and more. That life has no opportunity, no home, no work, no joy, no song. Oh, it is sad ! How is it ? We cannot tell ; we must wait ; in centuries to come we shall know. But I have noticed that even such a soul complains less than the people who look upon it. The soul has its own inmost delights ; it says, " It is well, it is best ; I must wait for the Lord patiently, and at last I will see why it was ; meanwhile, I have bread to eat that the world knoweth not of ; and there is a general impression that I am forsaken, but in my soul I know that God is with me." This is a mystery of grace. God's children are not so forsaken as they sometimes appear to be ; the Lord knoweth his own, and he will not deny his own autograph, his own seal.

Who can understand Providence itself ? It is its own greatest mystery. There is a greater mystery than the mysteries of Providence, and that greater mystery is Providence itself. The greatest mystery is God. What is Providence ? Shall we break up the word into providence ? " Provide "—it is the word of a housewife ; provide—see for, prepare for, arrange for ; they will be back presently from the plough, have the meal ready ; from the school, be ready with the little feast ; from abroad, have the welcome ready prepared. This is providing for, seeing for, seeing after, being eyes to the blind and feet to

the lame. This is the mystery of the divine rule. It is too high for me. There are so many of us, millions and hundreds of millions, and millions and millions squared and cubed up to the innumerable and the inconceivable—and not one guest at God's table without a plentiful supply. I believe this is more than poetry ; this is a faith that goes beyond the line of ideality ; this is rest, sweet rest in God.

Need we go so far away as to speak of the mysteries of Providence and of Providence itself? There is a mystery quite as great, and that is to *me* itself. Who am I? What? Whence come? What is this life, this palpitation, this perpetual wonder and mystery? I think, I pray, I disbelieve, I harden myself into distrust ; I have said, in moments of madness, "There is no God." Why, I am a mystery myself ; the *me* stands next to the God in mysteriousness. If men would heed this doctrine they would be quieted often. Why go out of themselves to find mystery? The greatest mystery is at home—your own soul. Understand man, if you would understand God. So then we are humbled down into little services, domestic ministries, fraternal action of sympathy and healing and assistance. Yes, that is so. We do not need our wings yet. Now we can only flutter ; by-and-by we shall be able to fly with the strong ones, whose wings darken the firmament. The very last thought you had is as deep a mystery as the existence of God. When you said, "*I will*," you spoke like Deity ; when you said, "*I will not*," you touched the depths of hell. Why all this moaning and sighing about outward mysteries and heavenly metaphysics? Turn your eye in upon yourself, and see in yourself Deity enough to perplex your manhood.

And this little "*me*" comes by-and-by to know that it is redeemed. It says, "I am redeemed, not with cor-

ruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Jesus Christ"; so small, yet so great; worth nothing, yet worth blood, heart-blood. The mystery thickens as the drama unfolds; who can tell what will be the sublime catastrophe? If we know how much value God puts upon *me*, we must study the Cross of Christ; that is God's estimate of *me*. By that Cross God says, "Man is worth redeeming; I am saving my own image and likeness, for in that image and likeness of myself was man created: he must be bought by myself as he was by myself made." Thus it is all mystery together, and thus we were never designed to put our hands into the clouds; that would be theft. Let us keep ourselves to prayer, and avoid mean felony.

And this "*me*" sees one day that it is meant to be immortal; sees indeed for once that it is immortal. What does immortal mean? It means not mortal, not to be death-struck; fire cannot burn *me*, water cannot drown *me*; I must live because I am alight with the flame of God's own existence. Then how can there be things too high for me? They are not always too high for me; I shall grow up to them. They are too high for me now, but I am growing; one day I shall over-pass them and get beyond them to other things loftier, grander still; for God is unsearchable, immeasurable. Then inability is not humiliation? Certainly not. It would be humiliation if we had ever lost these higher things and the power and capacity to reach and appreciate them. It is not humiliation, because we are growing up towards them. There is no humiliation in being a child, but if the old, strong, mature man could be crushed back into a weak, tottering little child, that would be humiliation. Childhood grows; spring grows. There is no humiliation in growth. Let

us realise this doctrine and be sober-minded. Let us do just what little we can do. Yet it is not little, but very much ; for God directs it, God accepts it, man needs it ; all love is a gift divine. Here is a lesson to the man who is waiting until he can do some great thing. Naaman returned from the prophet disappointed ; he said, " I thought he would come out, I thought he would at least be civil." No ; the prophets are not civil. He is a poor prophet who is merely civil in order to conciliate outward greatness and pomp and circumstance. The prophet must always be the highest man. He has a right to sit. Said the servants to the haughty and offended man, " If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it ? how much better to wash and be clean." We do want to do some great thing, and therefore we often do nothing. You are waiting your opportunity ; when you come forth it is to be in twenty thousand chariots, with a great throng of attendants and an infinite retinue of pomp. Then you will never come, you will never do anything. What you are wanted to do is the next simple thing—very small, so valuable and so necessary. O poor soul, do it ! then thou shalt have strength to do something above and beyond that, and God will not see thee worsted at the last. We cannot all be great men, yet we can be great in our very littleness, great in faithfulness, great in silence, great in quietness, great in wordless assistance. Not he who makes the greatest noise, but he who does his work most faithfully is accepted of God. For twenty years you have been determining to come forth and do something ; you have never come : why have you not come ? Because you thought you would do some very high thing and some very great and grand thing when you did come. You have lost twenty years of your life.

Here is a lesson to those who have great spiritual ambitions ; men who want to be great readers of divine mysteries, of Providence, of the plans and purposes of God. The voice says, "By-and-by, in a century, in a millennium, thou shalt see God." This is a hidden hope ; **this** is not a mere sentiment, it is an inspiration, a source of strength, a great confidence ; hold it and be strong. And here is a lesson to those who want to push their inquiries too far here and now. There be those who say to the preacher and the teacher and the expositor, "How so? Explain this ; what about this mystery? what is the answer to this great question?" The answer is, "Wait : what thou knowest not now thou shalt know hereafter." Whence came we? from dust, or otherwise? The answer is, "It does not yet appear what we shall be." There is a past, there is future ; we should be more interested in the future than in the past. *What I shall be* should be my great, elevating, inspiring inquiry. Do not expect too much from your teachers ; they are men of like passions with yourselves ; they have their own difficulties and doubts, humiliations and snubbings, their own disappointments and mortifications.

Here is a great lesson for all those of us who wish to live to-day, simply, earnestly, usefully. A man may stretch himself so high to see things beyond the stars that he may fall over the next stumbling-block : it should be ours to look around us and below us, and see what we can do that is useful. Do not be the great man, the grand, mysterious soul, the cloud-flyer, the planet-discoverer and wanderer ; but keep thee near the shore, and keep thee near the haunt of poverty, and the bed of pain, and the nursery of childhood, and the school where ignorance seeks to be taught ; be faithful in few things, and God will make thee ruler over many things. "Oh !" say you, "my vocation is so poor

and so simple ; I want something grander." Show that you are worthy of something greater by doing with perfect faithfulness the little things that are now handed to your care and to the trust of your love. We shall never reach God ; he is the far-away mystery, he is the eternal wonder. Yet in going towards him more and more, step by step, we get strength and light and assurance of immortality.

PRAAYER.

OUR Father in heaven, we thank thee that all things are moving on to the song which thou didst mean at the first. Thou dost work but for music. Thou dost not leave things in roughness, incompleteness, and discord. Give us the spirit of patience, that we may wait for thee calmly and hopefully. We would be strengthened by a strong assurance that thou art on the throne, that not a wind flutters in all the forest of the stars but by thy decree, or thy permission. We would be strong men dwelling in a strong tower. Lord, increase our faith. In the tower of faith we shall be safe; yea, we shall enjoy from its windows all the storm and wrath of the sea. We know that thou art on the throne; thou art a great King above all gods. Ambition has tried to share thy throne, and has failed: love has been bowed down before thee in utterest and sweetest humility, and because of this thou hast called love to share thy throne. We would have the long sight of faith: we would have the infinite patience of love. We would not drive with the fury of ignorance, and the fearlessness of mere audacity; we would be quiet with the calm of God. We would know that the days are not longer than one another, that all things are measured and timed, and that at the right pulse-stroke thou wilt come, or go, or shine forth, or becloud the heavens with night. Thou doest all things according to thine own counsels, and thine own power and might in Christ Jesus the Lord. Keep us from meddling with God. Give us the faith that waits; that does everything by often doing nothing; that has learned the mystery of the Cross, and the virtue of standing still. We have come to thank thee in common song for common blessings. The air belongs to every man; every child bathes in the infinite sea of the sunshine. All the earth is thine; thou dost let it out unto husbandmen to grow fruits and flowers for thine own using, thou King of Kings. Help us by the power of the Holy Ghost to make all life one sacred discipline, one delightful revel in goodness and in hope; one holy sacrament

of obligation and responsibility. Look upon us as a whole ; a company completing one another, helping one another towards the expression of manhood in Christ Jesus. Be graciously pleased also to look upon us individually. Every flower has its own root, or its own portion of the common root. The heart knoweth its own bitterness. Each spirit is rich with a sorrow of its own, with wounds it cannot communicate. Thou hast given each a burden to bear, a life to lead ; oh, that we may individually so lead the personal life as to make it finally part of the common and infinite harmony. Some are bowed down and dare not say so, lest they should lose what little repute they have amongst men. Some are living a double life, giving the devil one hand, and professedly lifting the other to thy holy heaven. And each is struggling with the flesh, with wolfish, tyrannous, insatiable desire for blood, and gratification and delight forbidden. This body is waiting for its burning into a better house. Others are full of joy, because every day shows them some larger, brighter vision of heaven ; the horizon is farther off ; the night is richer with stars ; and the sun is but the visor of thy face. Come to us, we humbly pray thee, at the Cross ; to each soul as it most needs, and give each a draught from the well of living water. Omit none from thy blessing. If any man has broken his vow, may it not be resumed to-day ? If any man has neglected his oaths, may he not recall the holy words as empty vessels, and fill them with the wine of his repentance and love ? If any man be a stranger in the house of God, having been wandering in stony places, and listening to noise in which there is no music, if he has returned to the house, may he not also return to the home, to the inner place, and to the table of sacrifice and redemption ? Lord, lift us by the power of the Gospel heavenward ; give us nobleness and elevation of soul ; may all that is sordid and temporal pass away out of recognition, lie down in the lowest dust that it may not stand between us and the light. Come with comfort ; smile death into life ; speak comfortably to those who are dwelling in the valley ; inspire every soul with a deadly hatred of sin, and inspire every spirit with a holy ambition after righteousness. We breathe our trembling, but believing, prayer, at the Cross. If that cannot save us then salvation is impossible. Amen.

IX.

TO DIE,—TO LIVE.

We must needs die.”—2 SAM. xiv. 14.

THAT is the word which drives frivolity out of its dance, and roughly chokes the laugh of folly. We must, we must, we must what? Die! The tether is shortening, the evening broadens its shadows, the hills that were once so distinct are now part of the clouds. The life-sun hastens to its setting. We ourselves are spectres floating through the shadows. The whole action ghostly, weird, often like the swelling and the breaking of the sea-waves, not seen, yet not far off. Far off, no, quite close at hand, splashing our very faces and disfiguring us with broad flecks of foam. This thought should now and then make even the fool halt an hour in his wild way; even the fool must die. For him the earth must find a grave, though it poison itself with such degraded flesh. Say that the revel will last for ever, then the fool may pit folly against wisdom, and choose the immediate heaven of wine and hot blood. Immortalise the body, and you immortalise the fool, his folly, his Godlessness, his emptiness. Say that the revel is but for a night, and the whole relation of things is changed. Say that the morning stands at the door with uplifted and avenging sword; then where is the fool's boasting, and what is the virtue of his stocked bin? Do get at the reality of things,—their proportion, size, colour, and perspective.

The text is a cold commonplace, quite the tritest of pithless, dry sayings, fit only for the headline of a child's

copybook ; yet there it is. Very common ; but nothing can drive it out of its place in history. Nothing can paint it into beauty that can deceive even a child's eye. The paint wears off. Death stares with blind eyes after the vermilion and the indigo have been washed off by the rain. Death is everywhere, yet death need be nowhere. We die, yet we need never die. We may so die as not to see death ; we may elude the groping of his cruel hands. The text is a cold half-truth ; truth minimised into a fact ; we must turn it round and get the morning view. The text sounds to me hollow, unreal, abased and despoiled poetry. I do not like the voice in which it is uttered, though it is a woman's voice. It is not her own voice ; she is but the reciter of apothegms, and common-places. I see how she has been treating her face, and dressing herself up into widowhood that she may impose upon me. She is no widow, she is acting a part,—theatrical without being dramatic. This is an imposition ; and that keen-eyed king, she well called him “an angel of God,” said to her, when her recitation was done, “Is not the hand of Joab with thee in all this?” And the woman was pallid with fear. She said, “None can turn to the right hand or to the left from ought that my lord the king hath spoken. Thou art as an angel of God. Thy servant Joab, he bade me, and he put all these words in the mouth of thine handmaid.” Who can hide anything from the seer of the Lord, from the eyes that look inward, not the ox eyes that cannot see more than an acre ? Now that we have got rid of this woman deceiver from the text the words come to us without being despoiled by the medium of her simulated earnestness, and they sink into their own proper commonplace, but yet they are still the grimmest fact in history. It shall be well with us if we take up the words and treat them, not as a recitation, but as conviction,

and get out of them what we may of chastening, and impulse, and spiritual sustenance, "We must needs die." That is sense. O man, in the very centre of the marketplace acknowledge that this is sense! We ply thee with no superstition, we seek not to conjure thee with some April fancy or dream. This is reason, logic, real downright sagacity.

First: "We must needs die." Then let us make the most of the hour; there is no time for idleness, there is no time for self-indulgence, or luxury; there is no time for bitterness, harshness, unfriendliness, hostility, or murder, even of the palest kind. Shall we all work down to the common sunset? No. Why not? Because every life has its own sunset; we do not work in a hired gang. We die one by one. Some have a short day; one dies in his full strength; another never eateth with pleasure, he is cut down as with violence. Yet no man can see the sword that has struck his life in twain. Given a common day, a common time of starting, and a common time of ending, and all things would be superficial, simple, and quite easy of calculation. But the weakest outlives the strongest; the old man buries the little child: the mother goes before her babe has drunk milk enough from the fountain of her life. This is the tragedy in which our life is set. Let us be wise then, having a good understanding of the things round about us. To think that no man knows when he may be called to his last account, to think that the soldier may die while his sword is threatening death to another! Surely this element of uncertainty becomes a kind of religion. We are now dealing with facts; we are now in the unpoetical region of statistical commonplaces, and in them we find the beginning of a sacrament; the germ of a religion, the blossom of a

faith. Always notice how strong in reason is the Christian appeal.

Secondly : " We must needs die." Thanks be unto God for promised release from weakness. The pain cannot last long. Weariness is pain, not acute, not rising to the point of agony, but dull, numb, burdensome, monotonous, pitiless pain. Is it nothing to have a voice sounding in the ear of the heart saying, This pain cannot last long, it is working out a most useful end if accepted in a spirit of Christly resignation? The body is educating the soul in its last lesson under the heavens ; but then it is the last lesson. It may be ended to-morrow, it cannot be perpetual. The body itself is perishing in the very act of giving this lesson to the soul. Cheer thou ! Thy Lord hath already thrown back the curtains of his sanctuary, and he is coming down to thee with noiseless step, and when he comes, his coming will mean release ; and then, so mysterious are the actions of the ministries that operate upon the soul, you will wish that you could have had another full twenty-four hours' endurance of that pain, because the more pain the more joy ! O tired man, weary pilgrim, whose sandals have long been unloosed, when thy Lord cometh it will mean release, liberty, the prison door will crumble away, and the whole fragrant air of the heavens will be full of welcome and cheer. When the soul grasps that conception of things the words, " We must needs die," fall away to make room for the grander words, " For ever with the Lord."

Thirdly : " We must needs die." Blessed be God for the wider liberty. This life is a bond-house ; we shall not always be walled in ; the roof shall give way and be displaced by the blue sky. Surely we must know what these yellow lights mean, these scattered lamps over the

infinite streaks of blue ; Who planted them, who lights them, who keeps them going? We must see more of this house in which we live. We have seen the earth, but that sight is not worth mentioning ; men have actually measured the earth, and who cares for a world on which a measuring yard can be laid and which can be told off in miles like such and such a ball of thread ! There must be something larger than we have seen. All these April buddings and blossomings, mean more than themselves ; they are visors hiding faces. There was a summer before them, there is a summer after them, there is a summer above them. Know that your soul has been starved and dwarfed, if you are content with the face of the earth. We grow in our appreciation of magnitude and distance. Once no man thought of coming from the north of England to the south, say to London, without making his will, convoking his family, and taking a kindly adieu of his friends. That was the little old-fashioned way of doing things. As for going across the sea,—that was to have a name in history, and a final memorial in the native market-place. Now we speak in terms of the world ; we are national, international, cosmopolitan, and the world is too small a vessel to hold all the wine we wish to drink. All this means wider liberty, greater scope for the soul ; a holy contempt for everything under our feet, and the earth has been nowhere else. We want to see the worlds overhead, and round about ; we may have to creep into them, half ashamed to tell where we came from ! Where did you come from? I would rather not say where. But pressing you yet more graciously, Where did you come from? You answer, From a place called the earth. Never heard of it ; where does it lie in the field-space? I know not. But you have left the little earth for the greater sphere, the wider opportunity. And

this is the vital point, that our use of the next sphere may depend very largely on the use we have made of this little world. Make the best use you can of the small dust within which your body has to stay. There are many earths ; there is the geologist's earth which is made up of strata, and ages, and beds, and mysteries which the common mind cannot penetrate. There is the labourer's earth, who can just touch a little of the surface and turn it into garden, and orchard, that he may feed himself with its fruits. Each may be a true man within his own sphere. Do not let us envy each other's calling and opportunity. Every servant will be judged by the common Master, whose name is Righteousness, whose smile is Heaven.

Fourthly : "We must needs all die." We may die in Christ, and if we die in Christ we do not die in any humiliating and pitiful sense ; we "languish into life." We go through the river with the Saviour ; or if it be through a furnace that we pass, there will be in it one like unto the Son of Man. He that liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Christ hath abolished death. It is to the Christian no more a weird and gruesome thing, a spectre "making night hideous," it is the inbringing of light and liberty, with all the results of the redeeming Cross. You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins. Beware of the death of the soul ; you can make your soul as a thing of days by starving it, neglecting it, insulting it. You can make your soul the best part of yourself by bringing it into vital relation to the Cross of Jesus Christ ; then "we must needs die" becomes we must needs pass from earth and time and cloud, into heaven, eternity, and light !

PRAAYER.

ALL things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. Lord, we are blind, born blind; that we may receive our sight is our uppermost prayer. We have heard of the wondrous visions that are round about us, but have not seen them; ours are as the eyes of oxen fixed upon the pasture. We would have eyes of the heart, vision of the soul, gift of the Holy Ghost. We see nothing as it really is; we see but the body, the shape, the figure, the transient image; we want to see the deeper life, the larger meaning. Is this denied us? Did not our Saviour, in whose name we pray, say that we should do greater works than he did? May we not see the angels, and see the movements and the mystery of things? Shall the veil always hang between us and the true glory? Is there no way whilst in the flesh to be out of the flesh, and to rule over the body with perfect mastery? We would see thy going, we would hear thy foot-step; we would feel thy breathing. We are tired of these dull senses, wilt thou not supersede them and give us already our house from heaven? Thou knowest best. We count not ourselves to have attained, but by thy spirit we do press toward the mark for the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus. There are such wonders beyond the wall, such infinite glories on the other side of the mountain! There are no chains there, no night is there. Yet we are kept here in wonder, and doubt, and unbelief, struggling with a mortal enemy who sleeps not, neither slumbers; but thy grace is sufficient for us; if God be for us, who can be against us? If thy grace be in our hearts, a great and living power, we can resist all evil, and trample on the enemy of souls. Poor life! have we not drunk its cup even to the dregs? Is it to be always like this, over and over again, until our hearts are saddened by the awful monotony? Or are we to see the meaning of the whole, and to say, it is right, and the simple task is to-day's duty, and we will do it in the strength of God? Are we to be cheerful? Are we to have within us the spirit of thy music? Are we to live the love life, and take all things as from a Father's hand? Look upon us, so sad, so

poor, so desolate, hardly venturing to return home to face the desolation. Look upon others of us who are full of joy, and gladness, and thanksgiving, and whose very roof is a kind of minor sky, lighted with the stars of thy love. Look upon those who are very sick, worn out and ready to perish. The world is full of sickness; the air is heavy with farewells. The Lord hear us; for we pray in Jesus Christ's name, and at Jesus Christ's own Cross. Amen.

X.

THE REALITY OF CHRISTIANITY.

"Showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ."—ACTS xviii. 28.

THAT was the way of Apollos—a Jew born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures, and instructed in the way of the Lord. He was a man of fire, a second Elijah, though only knowing a baptism of water. He had a very simple ministry; he was a Bible preacher. This is the testimony borne of his preaching: "He mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly"—open to public challenge—"showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ." It was a literary argument; it was a high reading of history. Apollos had only one book, but all books in one. Is there a greater mistake than to suppose that because a man knows only the Bible, therefore he is a man of one book only? The Bible is not one book; the Bible is all books of light and music and truth and beauty in one transcendent volume. Apollos, therefore, took the simple course of going back upon the Bible, the religious book in which the people professed to believe, and his short and simple argument was, "If you believe this book, you must believe this particular man to be the Christ." That is one way; that is one arm of the ministry. It is, however, only one;

nor is it the supreme arm of the ministry. Yet it was one of Jesus Christ's own ways. If the New Testament had been written then, Apollos might have said, "I fashion my ministry upon the preaching of Jesus Christ himself." The Lord was constantly referring to the Scriptures. He was not referring to something that was out of reach of the people; his was no cloud-reading, his was no attempt to establish a new system of metaphysics. He said, in effect, "You have a certain book or scroll in your hands; if you believed that book, you would believe me; you do not believe me, therefore you do not believe your own book." That was the sharp and retortful method of the great Teacher. "If ye believed Moses, ye would believe me; for he wrote of me—he had no other speech; when he wrote, 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,' he wrote of me; when he wrote the whole story of creation, poem, or history, he wrote of me; the red line of my blood crimsoned his whole page; you do not believe in me, then you do not believe in Moses; you have misread your own Bible; you know it in the letter, you do not know it in the spirit; you know it as a prose classic, you do not know it as an ineffable genius of wisdom and righteousness and divine revelation." That is a great argument. It is a mighty practice in dialectic and in preaching to take the book of the enemy out of his own hands, and say, "You profess to believe this book, but you do not; lay it down, it is no property of yours."

So it is with great, kind, gracious Mother Nature. If men do not find in her the beginning of the Gospel, they do not read her aright; they know nothing of the juices of her spring, they know nothing of the blushing of her summer. Jesus Christ showed us this plan of treating

the opposition when he taught in his school and we gathered around his feet. He said, "If the people profess to believe the Bible, and yet do not receive me as the Christ, they do not read aright the very Bible they are so proud of." And he said, in effect, "If men come up after me, generation after generation, interpreting nature, and do not find me in the quarries of the rocks, in all the foliage and fruitage of the harvests, in all the beauty of light, and in all the music of colour, then they do not read nature aright, they misspell all her words, and they do not catch the scope and the tone of the Gospel which she is ceaselessly breathing." That was Jesus Christ's method. Said he of the Scriptures, "They are they which testify of me: there is only one topic in the Bible; all that you call Providence and history and event and anecdote, all these things come together in one sacred consolidation—myself, my Person, my Priesthood, my Cross, my Incarnation: if you do not find these things in your Scriptures, it is not because they are not in the Scriptures; they are a sealed book to you; they are the prose of literature, not the poetry of experience and the delight of revelation." Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he showed unto them—the two travellers to Emmaus—the things concerning himself. A greater than Apollos is here.

Here, then, is one way, a great way, of proving Christ, a permanent way. We shall need literature to the end of the times, but let us understand that it is literature. He who knows one letter does not therefore know the alphabet, and there is a preaching that is as a single letter, and is not as the total alphabet, capable of fifteen thousand times fifteen thousand times of permutations, changes, variations, inwrappings and involutions, and out-

comes of new pictures and music. Let us beware of this one-letter ministry and this one-virtue exaltation, this pet grace display ; as if a man should select one letter of the alphabet and be strong on that, and boast of it ; as if a man should cultivate some one particular grace, and judge all other men by their growth in the same excellence ! That is dangerous ; in criticism it is fatal ; in literature it is a blunder. We must take in the sum-total and the complete idea, and judge accordingly. One man is strong on the letter W. There you give him great credit. Why should you ? They say in divers circles of criticism, "Whatever else he may be, there is no doubt that upon the letter W he is exceedingly and unchangeably orthodox." That is just equal to saying that you have picked out some particular item or doctrine in the great Christian dogmatics, and you are claiming to be orthodox because you are very strong upon that point. It is a mistake ; it will be the ruin of the symmetry of your mind and your character. There are no solitary graces ; there are no solitary worlds. God proceeds by unity and consolidation ; and if you have only one grace you have no grace, for the graces belong to one another ; they may be greater, or they may be less, but they are groups and clusters and households.

When Jesus Christ could make little or no impression upon the people by references to their own Scriptures, they being scholars of the letter only, and not of the spirit, he said one day, "Believe me for the works' sake ; if you will not understand my Word, if you will not correctly and deeply read your own Scriptures, believe me for the works' sake. This is my challenge : 'Can any other man do these works ?'" Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, "Master, we know that thou art a Teacher come from God, because no man

can do these miracles that thou doest,"—this particular kind and quality of miracle,—“except God be with him.” There were miracles, there were conjurings, there were skilful deceptions of the onlooking people, who imagined that their poor vision could follow the cunning of the trick ; but no man can do these miracles that thou doest—miracles that separate themselves into uniqueness of isolation—except God be with him. “ Now, tell me how it is, and come with me in this nightly solitude. If you will not believe my words, if you will not believe your own Moses, and my Moses, believe me for the works’ sake, believe me for the results of my ministry ; be decent, if you cannot be generous ; be just, if you cannot be noble ; and compare all other works that have been done with mine, and believe me for the balance.”

That is the same argument which he addresses to us to-day. The works are still being wrought, the miracles are all at hand—the deeper, grander miracles ; and Christ now saith to us from the heavens, bending over our stubbornness and unbelief and waywardness, “ Believe me for New Guinea’s sake ; you know how I found New Guinea ; you know the history of New Guinea as to cannibalism, barbarism, cruelty, all manner of hellish thought, desire, and practice ; you knew the place before I went to it ; let us go down to-day and see New Guinea. The people are singing hymns and psalms, churches are being built, homes are being fashioned and brightened and established, cannibalism is being left behind. Believe me for the works’ sake. Take any other field of missions, and all I ask,” saith the Man who died for the world, “ is that you judge me by my works ; judge the Gospel by its results ; and when atheism, secularism, agnosticism, or any manner of worldliness has produced the same results,

judge between us : until then, look at the facts, read the evidence.

“ Nor need you go across the seas to find my works ; believe me for what I have done for your own child. He was a prodigal, I brought him home ; he was rebellious and unfilial, he was the burden and the terror of your life, and I went out after him, as after a lost lamb, and I brought him back again. What has he been to you since ? You know he has been the joy of your heart and the very glory of your household. Believe me for the works’ sake. Did atheism bring him back ? Did secularism convert his soul ? Did agnosticism so work upon him that he hastened back to his broken-hearted father and mother ? No ; the Cross touched him by its pathos, and brought him again to the abandoned home ; and in his name I ask you to believe that I am the Christ.”

Take any neighbourhood before the Cross is preached in it, take it after the Cross has been well proclaimed within it, judge between the two conditions of the place, and then say who is the Christ. The Christ that answereth by beneficence and social revolution and redemption and eternal progress and betterment, let him be Christ, though we have never heard his name before ! It is the old challenge ; it rings from the very battlements of heaven, and the world is bound to answer it.

Apollos “ mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ.” The Saviour himself had pursued the same plan, adding to it, “ If you do not understand your own Scriptures, do look at the works which we have wrought in your very midst, and believe me for the works’ sake.” That is another way, but it is not the highest way. What, then, is the highest way

of showing that Jesus is the Christ? You must refer to your own consciousness. A man must not find the Christ outside him only, he must find outside him a Christ which represents what is within his own secret soul, a Christ that lives in the very blood of his blood. The challenge is to us who profess ourselves to be followers of Christ. Suppose that we have an argument in a book, which we have; suppose that we have an argument in missionary endeavour and success, which we have; suppose these were our only arguments, people might treat them as external, critics might despise them as being open to literary and historical cross-examination of a very penetrating and difficult kind. But we have another way of showing that Jesus is Christ, and that is the way of showing what the dear One has done in our own spirit, our own heart, our own life, and our own consciousness; so that in order to destroy our argument men have first to destroy our character. This was the way that Paul practised, and by his practice recommended; this was the way which some of those cured by the miracles of Christ adopted. Said one, "Once I was blind, now I see." Pharisaism, account for it! you did not do it: who did? That is right, that is the *argumentum ad hominem*. That is the challenge of the Church, if she will take up her proper arms and go to the battle equipped, furnished for the desperate struggle. You know what you were before you received the Gospel, you know your own former tempers and habits: people who have followed the development of your course will assure you that you are hardly to be identified with your own past self. This is the way in which men speak of you: "How changed he is! how less austere, exacting! how much softer, gentler, mellowed he is! how greatly he now exceeds in considerateness for other people! what has happened to him?" "Christ has been born in him, the

hope of glory," is the answer, the full answer, the satisfactory answer. We are living epistles, known and read of all men ; we have new hopes, new motives. If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature ; old things have passed away, and all things have become new ; the summer of the Lord is upon him, and everywhere he is covered and enriched with the beauty of heaven.

So we prove the Christ by the Scriptures, by the miracles, and by human instances, and self-consciousness, and thorough knowledge of our own inward condition. Jesus has given us a new set of terms ; Jesus has started the mind upon new parallels, analogies, parables, and imageries ; Jesus has given us intellectual audacity. So now we see death, and death abolished. No Shakespear ever touched that eminence of thought. To kill Death, to go to the burial of Death, to inter grim, cruel Death, and erect no stone upon his dwelling-place—that was the idea of Jesus Christ ; no unbeliever ever invented it. Unbelief is intellectually poverty-stricken ; Unbelief lives a life of negation ; it dwells in the icy caves of the eternal No, or Don't-know, or No-man-can-know. Christianity is literature, poetry, genius, intellectual vitality and inventive-ness. Take that one image as proof and seal of the whole—that Jesus Christ undertook to abolish death. He who tussles with Death and throws the monster into his pit, he is Lord of all.

We can prove that Jesus is the Christ. He fills all our thoughts, covers the whole area of life ; he is not one of many, he is the First and Last. He handles the greatest situations ; he answers the most piercing interrogatories ; he does not abandon us in the darkness, he takes us to the edge of the grave, buries us, and waits for us on the

other side that he may give us the chaplets and crowns of heaven's own amaranths. If this be poetry only, there is none like it ; if this be but rhetoric, it is the rhetoric of a mind that is steeped in the very wealth and grace and glory of God.

This, then, is our threefold argument—the argument of the Scriptures, the argument of the works, the argument of the inner personal consciousness, the miracle that has been wrought within the temple of the individual soul.

If Jesus is the Christ, then confess him, be his followers, name yourselves after him, in the living, vital, divine sense of his name—the Saviour and Redeemer of all. You confess your politics, why not confess your Christianity ? You confess your patriotism, why deny your religion ? You are proud of the throne of your country, why not honour the Cross of your salvation ? We want more frankness, more direct attestation and confession in this whole matter of the Christian life. It should all be done modestly, tenderly, self-distrustingly ; and, once we bury ourselves in the humiliation of conscious weakness, we should say through all the thickness and folds of the darkness, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” Thus we have weakness and strength, humiliation and glory ; nothing in ourselves, all things in Christ. To know that and to say that is what is meant by confessing the Lord Jesus.

If Jesus is the Christ, tell everybody about him. There is no other man worth speaking about, there is no other name worth remembering. Yet out of this speech and this memory relating to Christ will come other speech and other recollection, ennobled by these primary relations to the Eternal Lord. Then every other human name will

become significant ; every human necessity will become an opportunity for doing good ; every prodigal soul will offer you the glory of taking that wanderer back to his abandoned Father's house. If Jesus is the Christ, do not put him on a level with others. Jesus will not have admiration. The one thing from which Jesus runs in shocked soul and distress of spirit is applause. He is not to be admired, he is to be adored ; he is not to be complimented, he is to be trusted ; he is not an advance on Socrates, he is the Everlasting Father, and his name is Wonderful. So long as we set our Christ on the seats occupied by the Platos, the Aristotles, and the divers philosophers and poets of the world ; so long as we reckon him one of many, he will be but little to us. He must be the Fairest among ten thousand and the altogether Lovely. He must stand alone. The word unique we may apply to him in a very special sense. God with us, yet God above us ; now familiar as the sunlight that plays around our feet, and yet majestic as the sun which no hand can pollute.

PRAAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, thy throne is in the heavens, and we are upon the earth ; therefore, our Father-God, our words should be few and well chosen. Lord, teach us how to pray. God be merciful unto us sinners ! That is a prayer thou dost always answer ; it is a cry of the heart, it is the poor man's tenderest word ; thou hast invested that prayer with almightiness. God be merciful unto me a sinner. Thy mercy is greater than our guilt ; where sin abounded grace did much more abound. Who can overtake the love of God ? Who can exceed the pity, the patience, the tears of heaven ? We will not judge one another, nor by one another will we be judged ; we will fall into the hands of the living God. Lord, come to us whilst we tarry at the Cross ; there is blood, there is death, there is life, there is immortality. We love the Cross ; it fills the great necessity of life. Come to us abundantly, give us a great visitation of thy presence and grace ; touch and sanctify our veneration ; may we stand before God full of awe, full of reverence. Banish every frivolous thought ; recall to our recollection everything that can make us solemn ; may each of us wait to hear the words of the living God. For this thy house was built ; thou wilt come to the man who is of a broken and a contrite heart, though thou art the high and lofty One, the Inhabitant of eternity. Amen.

X.

HIGH HEAVEN.

“ As high as heaven ; what canst thou do ? ”—JOB xi. 8.

THERE is an Immeasurable—why should there not be an Unknowable ? Whatever is immeasurable is unknowable ; yet there it is. There are some heights we cannot reach : do we therefore deny them ? We think we see them, but we do not. It is like man to make

everything as little as possible. We say to him as he gazes upon the infinite space, "What is that blue line?" He says, "It is haze, azure, cloud." What small words he uses! He thinks if he has said "azure" he has gone far enough in a religious direction. Yet we know that up there, far away, where no eagle's wing has reached, there are stars, planets, worlds, burning points, mystery upon mystery, nameless, endless. This earth is only like a little stepping-stone that we put one foot upon, that we may see as it were over the hedge into the boundless estate of God. There are, then, let us say again and again, some heights that cannot be reached by eight feet. The world itself has objects that are more than eight feet high. Do we acknowledge the root of the tree because we stand upon it, and deny the top of the tree because we never handled it?

That would not be common sense even on the part of agricultural labourers; that would be bad reasoning on any man's part. It is something then to know that there are realities which we cannot handle, distances which we cannot measure. It is something for us proud hearts and vain to be told to stand where we are and look on. Nature does not write "Touch not" upon her exhibition; she leaves that little hortatory French to our poor show. She need not write upon the stars, *Ne touchez pas*. Some heights can be stood upon; others have never known the print of feet: why not acknowledge both? why not learn lessons from both? Why not have a head as well as have feet? Why not a sky as well as an earth? All these things are the elements of our noblest thinking; all these things are fruitful of the highest and sublimest suggestions. It is something to know that there are some things we cannot know. It is edifying to be compelled to confess

that there are some things we cannot handle. Some subjects can be talked right out ; they can be talked into drivel and nothingness. Why? Because they are little, frivolous, mean, shallow. You could talk the weather right out ; you could talk all your own little pains and sufferings and gossip clear out, until not one ragged syllable remained. Will you live amongst such subjects? Are they enough for you? Would you not like sometimes to hush the voice and speak as if you saw shapeless shapes? Would you not now and then like to wake and say, "This is none other than the house of God and the gate of heaven ! lo, God is here, and I knew it not " ? Your whole life would be lifted up to a new level by this desire, by this sweet, solemn piety. You would return from such lofty contemplation and do your merchandise with cleaner hands and more skilful and prosperous fingers. True religion never spoiled any man's business capacity. Real, honest, healthy piety never disabled a man from doing legitimate business and making legitimate money. There is a hypocrisy to which we do not invite ourselves. But because there is a hypocrisy there must be a piety. No coin would be counterfeit if there were no standard coin of the realm. Do you like subjects that can be emptied, talked out, blown away? or do you like to stand before an infinite height and say, "This is the stairway up to heaven " ?

If we cannot measure God's space, how can we measure God's thought? Thus we are entitled to reason. If we cannot do the less, how can we do the greater? That is so in all processes of reasoning. Man thus helps himself forward by small concessions and by acknowledgments which he cannot resist. He is a wise reasoner who says, "If I cannot carry an ounce, how can I carry a pound? If I cannot

do that which is little, how can I do that which is great? If I cannot drink up a stream, how can I swallow the sea?" Here is a space, whoever made it. You did not make it, I did not: if any man has made it, let him proclaim himself: but there it is, measured to immeasurableness, gazed upon until even dull minds become illuminated, and silent tongues become eloquent with music. If we cannot grasp it, understand it, explain it, how can we explain the thought out of which it comes? Some one must have made it; we must believe that, or believe the still greater mystery that it was never made at all. It may be well for some of us whose minds are less than infinite to accept the less difficult proposition. If we cannot understand or compass God's space, how can we follow all his thought? There is no searching of his understanding. And because he is great in power, not one little life or speck faileth. When the dew goes away it goes up, back to God. Is the earth polluting to the little visitant? Does it shudder when it sees our atmosphere, corrupted and poisoned by a thousand emanations? or does it fall downward sometimes that it may make the earth a little better, giving it as it were spiritual and Christian baptism in secret? How can we follow all the thought of God?—especially how can we grasp his personality? What is personality when put into words? It is nothing. There are no words that can adequately describe personality. We can describe it by figures and attitudes, we can partially realise it by the assistance of negations, we can tell what it is not. The highest personality we see with the eyes of our body is the personality called ourselves. We see man, the temptation therefore is to think of God as an infinite man. What if our definition be wrong? What if it be possible to the infinite God to be personal without being after the figure and attitude and mould of human nature?

"High as heaven ; what canst thou do ?" Shall we treat the inquiry mockingly, and tell Job to stand up that we may see just how high he is ? Suppose he should be six feet, seven feet high ; that does not help a man far towards the stars. A man seven feet high is not much nearer the moon than a man five feet high ; the difference goes for nothing in the great astronomy or even geometry. "What canst thou do ?" Put up thine arms, now measure him ; stand upon some stool thy mother gave thee, now take his height. Was ever figure more ludicrous ? Was ever attitude more grotesque than Job standing upon a stool trying to clutch the sky ?

If the work be so great, what must the Worker be ? Every worker is greater than his work. The statue is nothing to the sculptor. No sculptor was ever satisfied with the statue. No artist that was other than an hireling ever existed that did not want his subject to give him just another sitting. Unless you have fallen into the hands of a hireling you must really wrench yourself away from the artist. He wants just one more sitting,—a half-light, a half-shadow,—two hours more and he would be satisfied. Never ! You never can satisfy an artist, a truly inspired artist. He always wants just two hours more. Why ? Because of his greatness. His action brings new points into view ; as he paints he studies ; he sees you as he never saw you before ; a sudden thrill went through you and gave him a new view ; some word was spoken that lighted up your eyes, and he says, "I never saw that man before—just two hours more !"

The worker is always greater than his work. The worker never gets done. The hireling has the quickest ear the Lord ever created. No jackal can hear like a hireling.

He is half-way home before the clock has quite finished striking the retiring hour. He hears twelve striking a hundred and fifty miles off, he never hears one, till somebody nudges him gently. Do not call that man one of the working classes ; I will not have the working classes dishonoured by writing such a name on their record. We are now elucidating the point that the worker is always greater than his work. Some authors are the very plague of printers. The boy who brought the proof does not get half-way through the garden until he is called back just to amend half a line on this page or on that. Sometimes the author's corrections cost more than the author's text. He thought the manuscript was done, and he sent it away, and now he is the plague of his publisher—that always sweet and gracious character in history—because he wants to add just two lines more. And the musician can never be satisfied. No organ was ever built that would satisfy an organist. Three manuals !—he wants thirty up to the ceiling, and lift the ceiling higher ; never allow a ceiling to stand in the way of an organ. He says, “ More fire, more passion, some grander expression. It is not enough,” saith he, “ that I be heard, I must have power to thrill.” There are those wooden-heads, originating far beyond the ken of Darwin, who think it is quite enough if they can hear. To hear is not enough, unless you hear with your soul ; you must hear to the thrilling point, till the blood dances, till the nerves quiver as with a sting of fire ; then you know that the human voice is the human soul. We have told before of Handel, who, having composed some great piece, would hear it played and sung. He would sit in all parts of the building to catch the effect ; he would come to those who were expressing his thought and say in English, punctured with German, “ A leetle louder.” He would retire and listen, and return and say,

"A leetle louder"; and so he would come and so go, until the people's patience gave way, and they wondered where their lungs were to come from, or the wind was to come from to make the instrument talk as he wanted it to talk. But no, it never could do it; it may be that only in heaven he will hear his grand Amen. If the work of God is so great as known to geology, that grubber among the sciences, as known to astronomy, that most ambitious of all the angels that ever went out to measure the house he dwelt in,—if the works of God are so much greater than our imagination can conceive or our instruments measure, what must the Worker be? "These are thy glorious works, Parent of good: thine this universal frame, how wondrous fair! Thyself how wondrous then!" This is the way to God. Go from the creation to the Creator, from the thing made to the Power that made it, and surely he must have sold himself to some felonious dealer who has given up all intellectual ambition, and especially ambition of that quality which soon becomes wonder and reverence and prayer.

The soul cannot be self-measured. You do not know what is in you. The world hardly knew there was such a man as Von Moltke until he was sixty-six years of age; it did not know what a soldier was feeding upon it all the time until he was near seventy. No man can measure himself. There is a fire in some of us that could outburn a volcano. Look for your best self; awaken your soul. Are you going to be the dupes and victims of men who tell you how very little you are, of no consequence whatever—when you die the universe will never miss you, you will simply be crushed like a moth, thrown away in powder? or are you going to listen to those who say you are made in the image and likeness of God? All those tears are

proof of your greatness ; your very weakness is an element in your strength ; your littleness is an educational instrument and force. You were made to conquer kingdoms, you were made for the society of angels, you were created to share the throne of God. Give me the great thought, give me the noble and ennobling suggestion ; it will help me to carry this little load of life all the more cheerily and hopefully. There is enough to depress ; let us hear some sweet gospel word that will develop our yet untold and uncalculated strength. All vastness should lead us to prayer. Men should be solemn on the sea ; the earth as we know it, in its forests and wildernesses and gardens, is then shut away, and there is nothing but the great heaven and the mirror which throws it back again as if in joyous self-congratulation. All men should be solemn in solitude. Solitude cannot be measured. You will sooner measure the light than you will measure the darkness. You do not know where to put your tape-line in the gloom. Black night will not be measured. Do not lose the vastness of these religious applications and possibilities. The infinite should be a temple.

What is the very highest point and thought of all ? Here we shall be surprised ; some may even be shocked. What is the greatest height—heaven ? No. The stars that lie beyond the eyes of the telescope ? No. What is the greatest object of all ? The Cross. “ God in the person of his Son hath all his mightiest works outdone.” That is the Christian faith. Apostles have looked upon the Cross and said, “ Great is the mystery of godliness.” Angels have desired to look into it. It is God's supremest miracle. “ O the depth ! ” said Paul ; then he dwelt upon the height and length and breadth of the love of Christ ; then he wanted his friends to have knowledge that passeth

knowledge—a Pauline paradox, a characteristic irony in words. To know the love of God which passeth knowledge. Only Paul ever wrote a sentence like that in the New Testament. All the other writers seem to stand back when Paul rises. Verily, he hath a wealth of thought all his own.

What is the great wonder in that Cross? Sinners loved; sinners yearned over; sinners trained to saintliness; God recreating man; God going beyond the clay-point, the dust-point, and beginning the creation of man in another element, and surrounding him, and indwelling other forces and ministries. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." All your geologies and astronomies become nothing, and less than nothing, in presence of the Cross. That will grow into a tree of life whose umbrageous hospitality shall be offered to all nations. This is like thee, thou great God; thou dost make the little great, thou dost make that which is of no consequence infinite in suggestion; by things which are not, and can never be in any concrete sense, thou dost hurl to the dust the proudest towns and towers of men. This Jesus is the eternal quantity. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. He is not a figure in history; he is the most potential force in to-day's thought, and he is the greatest offer made to to-day's necessity. Hear thou! Answer! This is the opportunity! Jesus of Nazareth passeth by.

PRAYER.

BEHOLD us, Father in heaven, at the Cross of thy Son our Saviour. We have no other altar ; we have no other Priest. Jesus is our Mediator, our Advocate, and Paraclete. He is mighty to save ; he will carry our prayer to thine ear, and behold he shall send down upon us answers of peace. We will sing of goodness ; for the Lord's hand hath been stretched out towards us in great gifts of love. Our song shall be of judgment and mercy. We have heard the rebukes of the Most High : who can stand before thy cold ? who can answer thy morsels of ice ? Yet will we sing of mercy, for the rain hath been as the tears of pity upon our way, and all the day long we have heard, even in the sighing of the wind, tones of entreating love. We will look up, therefore, and be glad ; thou wilt not rebuke us to our destruction ; the chastening of the Lord is for our good, the correction of his rod is for our strengthening. May we accept life as becometh children who trust in the living God ; may it be to us no chance, but a providence, a revelation of the Most High. Build thou the temple of our life, and it shall be strong and shapely and full of music ; may we lay no stone upon it but at the Lord's own bidding. Thus shall our life be a house of God, our whole history shall be a record of his love. We know how great thou art and terrible in righteousness and in judgment, but we still more truly know how tender thou art, how redeeming and elevating and protecting is all the grace of Christ. Thou hast brought us to this day with songs in our mouth ; when we thought the harvest was failing, thou didst find for us unexpected sheaves ; we went out with tears, we came back with songs : the Lord hath loved us, therefore we will love the Lord. We love him because he first loved us. We thank thee for all thy care, thy patience, thy tender tears ; may we not be lost, may we endure unto the end and be amongst those who are saved. How far away the end is, thou only knowest ; how near it is, thou alone canst tell. There is but a step between the

strongest and death; the Lord cometh at an unexpected time; the Lord will suddenly come to his temple: may we all be ready, with burning lamps, and plentifulness of oil; may we be ready to welcome the Bridegroom when the cry of his coming is heard. Deliver us from all fearfulness of soul. Thou knowest how easily we are depressed and beclouded and hindered; thou knowest the number of our spiritual enemies, the strength of all the forces embattled against us; thou knowest our weakness and our proneness to look unto the dust. Give us to feel that we are made in thine image and likeness, that though the body is of the dust, the soul was enkindled at the Eternal Flame; and may we by the power of the grace of Christ live our best life, realise our noblest selfhood, and come before God and man as worshippers of the one and servants of the other. We bless thee for our home life: how thick are the walls which thou dost build around us; how sure is the roof with which thou dost cover in the ark where thy loved ones rest! We bless thee for all our business activity and energy and enterprise; we thank thee that we can take an interest in these things and yet live in heaven; we come down from the higher citizenship to the lower, and return to the skies as those who long to be there for ever. Prosper thy servants in basket and in store; give them an abundance of bread; and as for their fields may they bring forth richly. Be with all for whom we ought to pray; specially with those who cannot pray for themselves, who have struck away from themselves the last foothold on which they could stand: thou knowest where they are; thou canst prevent their eternal sinking. O thou Healer of men, be thou our Physician to-day! Be with all who are contemplating great business schemes, all who are about to undertake important journeyings and voyages; be with them in their outgoing and in their incoming; yea, hasten their homecoming, and bring them back with great joy. Be with our loved ones in the Colonies, and in America, and in all the dependencies of the British crown, wherever they are in the world: and if they be prodigal in soul, be with them all the more, let their very sin endear them to their Saviour, that he may by his mightiest miracle redeem and reclaim them all. Be with all men who are in distress of soul, wondering about pain and loss, apprehensive about to-morrow, full of solicitude regarding incalculable events. Thou knowest all the wonderful workings of anxiety in the human soul; sanctify them, subdue them, turn them to the advantage of the spirit; and thus make the wrath of man to praise thee, and out of the clouds bring showers of rain. The Lord comfort us, for our souls are weary; the Lord bring back the sun into the heavens, that

he may pour down his vernal light and give pledges of his summer glory. Thus shall our hearts revive, and we shall forget the night. Lord, hear us at the Cross; wash us in the all-cleansing blood; save us with a mighty salvation. Amen.

XI.

NO FAULT FOUND.

“And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves.”—LUKE xxiii. 12.

WHY were they made friends that day? As soon as Pilate knew that Jesus belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction he sent him to Herod, who happened at that particular time to be in Jerusalem: so the matter fell out conveniently. “And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him,” to have had quite a private view of this most marvellous phenomenon. Herod thought that things were happening all for him; he thought he was in the movement that brought good luck. To himself he said, “Why, this is the man I have been wanting to see, and as fortune would have it he is now sent to me; I shall detain him a long while, and look through all his *repertoire*.” “Then he questioned with Jesus in many words”—too fluent, too wordy; an earnest man could not have spoken so much—but Jesus answered him nothing.” The balance must somehow be redressed; we cannot allow the equipoise to be trifled with. If one man talks too much, another man must be deadly quiet, and thus we must keep up the average and purpose of things. So “Herod with his men of war”—perhaps to

develop him, to tease him into some new manifestation—"set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate." That was all Herod could do. It is all some men can do to-day. They cannot get any foothold against Christ ; positive and acrimonious hostility or criticism seems to be out of the question, and all that can be done is thus to travesty and caricature the Beauty of heaven.

The noticeable thing is that "the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together : for before they were at enmity between themselves." This is what always happens when Christ is there. There is no longer any enmity where the Saviour is. He works a miracle even when seeming to do nothing. He was silent to dumbness, yet somehow there came about a reconciliation that nothing else could have effected. Look at the asides in Christian progress ; look at the unconscious and apparently unintended miracles of Christ's presence and priesthood in society. Pilate and Herod came together, and if they had been asked why or how, they might have been at a loss to put the explanation into sufficient words, yet the reference would have been to a circumstance created and ruled by the personality of Christ. Thus Christ is doing many things for which he does not get credit. There is a collateral Christianity ; there is an outside missionary agency going on always, and doing quite wonderful things ; and if men were told that these conclusions were reached by the power of Christ, they would resent the suggestion, declaring that they never went to church, or made any profession of Christianity, or cared at all for theological considerations ; all which might be literally and narrowly true, and yet under all and through all there is a mighty, magical, mysterious, beneficent action, originating in and

returning to the personality and sovereignty of the Son of God. There is a union that is brought about by mere opinion. Men like to know that others are of the same opinion with themselves ; judges, procurators, and divers men in authority like to have their own judgment confirmed. It is pleasant to hear that the court above has confirmed the decision of the court below. The court below feels comfortable, feels as if it had been caught incidently or accidentally in some act of wisdom, and there is a general feeling of warmth and professional repose all round the judicial or royal circle. How filmy is the nexus which binds men together in certain connections ! Wherever there is unity founded on mere opinion it is not worth a day's purchase ; there is nothing substantial in it. What is so fickle as opinion ? Opinion is but a mark upon the dial-plate or the table of degrees ; as who should say, " The temperature is sixty to-day ; to-morrow it is sixty-five ; yesterday it was fifty-nine." This is opinion, going up and coming down, and playing thus between certain defined points. Any unity therefore, let me repeat, that is founded upon mere opinion is a facial, lineal, temporary, non-cubical union, having only one dimension, wanting in depth and breadth.

Yet this is the very kind of unity some persons are most anxious to establish. They want everybody to be of the same opinion about Christ. I do not. I want to get deeper than opinion. No man ought to have any opinion of his own opinion. He should distrust his own opinion, because it is so quickly and fatally affected by digestion and circumstance, by luck or ill fate or other incidents. I would get down below opinion to the rock Faith—by faith meaning confidence, assurance,—the death-grip ; the conviction that says, " Live or die, this is my Christ, and

if I fall into the pit of everlasting darkness, he shall go down with me." When you have this other, broader, grander unity, you have the Church. The Church is not founded upon opinion, theological or ecclesiastical. Many persons mistake their opinions for their consciences. Even conscience may be drugged, even conscience may be bribed. Conscience may be suborned and degraded into a false witness. Have nothing to do with yourselves, your opinions, and your consciences. You had better get rid of all these things, and go livingly, lovingly, and everlastingly up to Christ, and die there with your Saviour. You are a nuisance with your opinions and your consciences, when those opinions and consciences are superficial or perverted, as they easily may be, as in many cases they must of necessity be, because of the mutable conditions and peculiar limitations and circumstances which constitute our present terminable and fickle existence. The Church is a union founded upon faith,—not intellectual faith, which is not worthy of a moment's consideration. Always distrust the intellect. It was the first of the faculties to fall; it wanted to be so much larger and brighter, it wanted to share the Godhead; and ever since it has wrought ruin in human history when unbalanced and unchastened, undisciplined and unwatched by the higher faculties of our nature. The unity which the Church represents is a unity of vital conviction, a unity which says, "We have no words, but we have such a feeling about Christ, such a passion of love for him, such an absolute consecration to his very name, that though you puzzle us with a thousand difficulties, and tear our revelation to pieces on the ground of discrepancy and incoherence and chronology, yet through it all we find in him a heart which has done more for us than any other heart ever did; and so deeply impressed are we by the miracles, by the suffering of that heart,

that we have agreed to call Jesus Lord and God and Saviour."

As for our little enmities, they soon go down when Christ is present. We think so much about him that we have no time to think about ourselves. Allow men to think morbidly about themselves, to live in their own little cottages, and never to see anybody but themselves in the mirror, and how full of complaints they are! Every man is a whole spiritual hospital himself; he has all the diseases that the soul is heir to, and he is troubled and pestered and distressed,—he cannot understand this, and he cannot understand that: but, poor soul, if he were snuffed out, where would he be? and what would society feel about that extinction? Why does not the man go out more into the fresh air? Why does not the man allow himself to be kicked about more in society? That is a species of education that is much neglected. We want to be more in contact soul with soul, life with life. The Church is not a little clay individuality, it is a living organism, and one member may not, will not, say to the other, "I have no need of thee." Blessed are they who say they are not complete until the other man comes, they are not at rest because the prodigal is away. In this yearning for other souls, even the wayward and the perverse, we are to find a proof of our own union with the Saviour. The difference between men who agree in opinion and men who agree in faith is the difference between having a notion about Christ and a real love for Christ. Who cares what notions you and I have about Christ? What notions can we have?—little-headed, little-souled, little-living people, who were not here the day before yesterday, and will be forgotten by men the day after to-morrow. Why all this pother about your

opinions, your notions? Man, know thyself to be vagrant, prodigal, lost, and hasten to the Cross! This would put an end to all our sectarianisms and bigotries and Christians fighting one with the other with unconsecrated weapons. What have we to do with one Christian lecturing another, and one lecturer abstaining from communion with another? This is the way to make infidelity wholesale.

"The same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together"—on the ground of agreeing with one another. They had found a point of union at last. They did actually agree about this man, and their agreement amounted to the verdict that there was nothing faulty to be said about him. Let us leave them and go to the larger application of the truth, which is this, that men cannot have a common love for Christ without having a common love for one another. This is what the angels say when they see us coming to Jesus Christ: "Now they will be made friends together; they never understood one another before, now watch what a miracle of reconciliation will take place." Thus neighbours who never spoke to one another as atheists or unbelievers or outsiders, the moment they have drunk sacrament together at Golgotha, their lips red with the healing blood, they take hold of each other's hands and say, "Let us go together to the throne of God." You cannot have a great spiritual miracle in your own heart without that spiritual miracle shadowing itself forth in certain happy social effects. No man can take the Lord's Supper and then go home and write down a list of his enemies. If he does write the list of the enemies, he has not taken the Lord's Supper; he has taken bread, poor baked meal; he has taken wine that can heat the blood but never soothe the heart. To love Christ is

to love your enemies, to throw the arms of your love around them, even though they may seem to tear off your clinging hands as if they hated your appeal. It is your business to be open-hearted and generous in spirit and loving towards all mankind, even when they hate you and gnash their teeth upon you. Let us lay it down as a great maxim, and remember it for ever that men cannot heartily, vitally, convictionally agree about Christ without agreeing with one another—not agreeing in opinion, let me say again and again, but agreeing in prayer. If you could hear two ecclesiastics—awful characters!—ecclesiastics, one opposed to the other,—oh, how mercilessly they treat each others' feelings! How keen in retort, how bitter in sarcasm, how subtle in satire or overt in hostility! It is marvellous to watch two ecclesiastics in battle. It is marvellous to see how many men the *Record* has knocked down without killing any of them. What are they in conflict about? Opinions—as who should say, Mr. *Record* this and Mr. *Church Times* this—there they go—watch them! You might let them out by the night and make money by an exhibition of the fray. Oh, sad, sad sight! If in some moment when the conflict lulled they could say to one another, “Let us pray,” you would hardly be able to tell which was which, they pray so much alike, with so common a reverence and tremblingness and contrition; their eyes are wet with tears, for their hearts are reckoning their sins. It is along that high line that we find the reconciliation of men and the unification of Christendom.

What was the difference between the Roman and the Jewish view? The difference which obtains to-day. The Roman view was negative, the Jewish view was positive. What have we, then, in the case of Pilate and of Herod? We have a negative estimate of Christ. Pilate said, “I

find no fault with him," and he adds, "No, nor yet Herod : for I sent you to him ; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him." What will come of this? What always comes of this. If you have only a negative view of Christ you will lose it. Negative attachment to Christ cannot stand against hell. Pilate's vote is, "No fault." Herod's vote is, "No fault." Will that save the Galilean from the Cross? Never. Hell can burn up all our negative criticism and theology and piety. To have a Christ with whom you can find no fault is to have a Christ you may lose any moment. Christ does not want the negative tribute "no fault," he wants the positive loyalty, "Christ for ever." But it has come to a very large negative condition of things in the Christian Church in all its communions. We hear Christ spoken of with admiration ; we hear him regarded as an excellent man, a good teacher, a faultless person, limpid in character, ideal in thought, transcendental in his conceptions of the universe and of God, a very beautiful shadowy spectre on the disc of history. Will a theology so limpid do anything for the race? Nothing. That theology will be overborne in the day of trial. The more Pilate said, "I find no fault in this man," we read, "And they were the more fierce." We do not want negative compliments, we do not want mere respectability in the Church ; we want a martyr-like passion that gives itself, body, soul, and spirit, to the service of the Cross. All persons who have a negative estimate of Christ ought to leave the Church. They are not members of the body of Christ ; they belong to the ecclesia—I will not call it Church—of Herod and Pilate ; they may be termed the Church of "no fault with Christ." Has it come to this, that men's opinion about Christ shall be, "I find no fault in him"? Is this the upshot of all the miracles, all the parables, all the teaching, all the suffering of the

Son of man? Is it to be this line of commendation we give him? Have we nothing positive to say? Do we merely write him a line of commendation to the next house, saying, "I find no fault in him"? Nay, verily, he shall go with no such tribute from us, he shall go rather with this: "He perverteth the nation, and he ruins society by the creation of false motives and false purposes and false ideals;"—or, "This is the Son of God, the Saviour of the world." You can do something if a man is in either of these conditions, but you can do nothing with a Pilate or a Herod concerning whom you can but say they have come to the conclusion that Christ is faultless in the eye of the law. We call for passion, for consecration, for dedication. Do not attempt to have a merely intellectual view of Christ. That may end in mere negativeness of relationship. I will tell you who has a negative view of Christ—the man who deprives him of his Godhead. He has a Christ about whom he says, "I find no fault in him: on the contrary, I see many excellences in him; I believe he set a very beautiful example." But the compliment itself is a degradation to the man to whom it is paid. You may so compliment the sun as to offend the majesty of light. We do not want these feeble, superficial criticisms about a man like Christ; we must be more vital, more fundamental, more thorough in our judgment and in its pronouncement. He has a negative view of Christ, from my point of view, who denies the sacrificial priesthood of Christ. I do not want Christ as a new talker, a new doctrinaire, a new theorist; I want a man who will do more, at least in intention and declared purpose, than any other man ever attempted to do. That man I find in Jesus Christ. He has a negative Christ who has no resurrection. The Church is founded, not on the birth of Christ, but on the resurrection of her crucified Lord. "If

Christ be not risen from the dead," said the Apostle, "then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." If your Christ is not associated with the idea—I will not say of divinity, which is a mutable term—but with Godhead, sacrifice, and resurrection, the Jews will take him from you, some enemies will wrest him out of your hands; they will bear down upon you with such tumultuous fierceness that they will have him at last.

Then it comes to this: "Shall we find no fault with Christ, or shall we offer him the adoration of our hearts?" Some men are now asking how little of Christianity may a man believe and yet be saved. It is a frivolous inquiry, it is indeed a foolish if not a profane question. If you ask me with how little may a man begin, then I say, "Faith is as a grain of mustard seed." If you ask me with how little can he do, then I say, "You want to deny Christ, you want to do without him if you possibly can, you want to reduce his priesthood to a minimum." The question should be, "How much of Christ can I have?" and when that question is put to heaven with the earnestness of a loving, tender, reverent, contrite heart, you will begin to know the meaning of the fulness, the pleroma of Christ. Then let us stand here to-day—namely, that if we love Christ we will love one another. There can be no enemies in the Church, there can be no enemies in the pulpit, and if any man is standing outside and saying, "Because I do not agree with you in certain things, therefore I will not co-operate with you in the service of Christ," then let the blame be his. If his opinion has made such a wreck of him as that, let him take the consequences of his own false thinking. He is living on the right side according to my view, who says, "Because Christ loved me and because I love Christ, I must love the brethren: I

know that I have passed from death unto life because I love the brethren : we were at one time enemies, we did not understand one another, at least we had little suspicions ; but now, since we have gone and found one another touching the same Saviour, all that is lost, a new, holy love has brought us together in a new manhood."

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we have come with our songs of praise. Our song shall be of mercy and judgment: unto thee, O Lord, will we sing. Thou hast given unto us with thy right hand and with thy left; thou hast beset us behind and before, and laid thine hand upon us. Thou hast withheld no good thing from us. Thy mercy endureth for ever. Where sin abounded grace did much more abound: the light is more than the darkness. God is light. We will bless thee therefore for all thy goodness and tender mercy, thy lovingkindness and thy compassion, thine almightiness and thy tears. We would live and move and have our being in God. We would follow the Lord; we would know no will but the will of our Father in heaven. There can be no loss in obedience. If we be faithful through thy grace we shall be led into all thy heavens, larger and brighter age by age throughout eternal duration. Give us the largeness of view which helps our littleness, our weakness, and our fear. When we see little we are made afraid; when we see the vastness of thy kingdom its largeness is our healing. Take away from us the spirit that would tear itself to pieces, and give us that quiet, holy spirit which rests in the Lord and waits patiently for him. Show us that our feet only are on the earth; may we think less of the earth than ever. Teach us that it was not made for our head or our heart, but for our feet only: whilst our feet are upon it may our head be in the heavens. Set your affections on things above and not on things on the earth, is an exhortation which we ask thee to enable us to obey. How wondrously thou hast led us each man knows best for himself; each man is his own miracle of grace. He knows with what devils he has fought, in what darkness he has trodden, in what solitude he has suffered; he has seen hell and told no friend about the vision; he has walked in darkness and tried to sing his fear away. Thou knowest us altogether, and in the judgment thou wilt distribute unto each according to circumstances known only to thy wisdom and thy love. Here we rest; we will not torture ourselves, we will say, "Thou Lord knowest all things, for thou didst

make us ; there is no secret in our heart that thou didst not thyself establish." Help us to walk amongst one another openly, frankly, kindly ; give us the fearless spirit which speaks righteousness with a righteous intent, and give us that clear conception of duty which knows no fear, but with high and tender courage moves onward through all circumstances and changes. The Lord be pleased to receive our hymn, our psalm of adoration, and our anthem of victory ; it is the Lord that hath done these great things for us, and his alone shall be the praise. As for the future, there is none to thee ; thou dost breathe eternity, thou dost see infinity and overflow it : to us there is little but future ; the next moment is hidden far away from us, and the keenest vision can make nothing of its signs. The Lord watch over us, go before us, help us and make us strong, and show us that patience is the last result of cultivated power. We commend one another tenderly to thy care,—the old man in his weakness, the little child in his laughter, the busy man in his often foolish sagacity. May no man be so busy here and there as to miss heaven ; may no soul so trifle with time as to forget eternity : but with all heaven shining in us and breathing through us may we do the work of earth and of time with a gentle dignity and an unwearying patience. May we keep the earth always undermost ; it struggles to rise to the top : may we have confidence in God that will enable us to keep it well underfoot. Thou hast tried us sorely ; thou hast rebuked our ambitions and thrown down our half-built towers which we expected would rise to heaven, and thou hast filled the wind at night with sounds ghostly and alarming. Thou hast made us afraid of our own shadow ; for there has been a shadow behind and a shadow before, so wondrous has been the setting of the lights of God. Keep us to right principles, to first, original, eternal love ; then we shall lie down and be safe, we shall arise in the security of God's almightiness, we shall go abroad expecting to find the Lord waiting for us. Thou knowest our business to-morrow,—trifling, frivolous, a business of mirthfulness ; or a great anxiety, a sad plague and trouble, the whole day gathered up into one solemn thundercloud, and we fear to meet it : thou knowest us altogether. Prepare us for thy providence by the ministry of thy grace ; then come what may, a whole heavenful of clouds or a whole heavenful of sunshine, it shall be well with us, and in the midst of the one or the other we shall eat of the Lord's body and drink of the Lord's blood, and be strong. Lord, hear us when we pray for those who never pray for themselves ; hear us, great God, when we pray for our loved ones here or there or yonder, far away on the sea, or on the

further shore. Hear us when we pray for those we have left behind us, the Lord comfort them; light the lamp at night, fill the window with light in the morning, and cause flowers to grow for them amid the snow. The Lord whose name is Love lead us all to the Cross, and there in presence of the dying Priest forgive our sins, and make us young again. Amen.

XII.

UNEXPECTED MESSENGERS.

“And there came a messenger unto Job.”—JOB i. 14.

AND there came another before the first got done, and whilst the second was speaking a third arrived; whilst he was yet speaking there came also another; and they are coming to-day, and every day, and will always come, and we are fools if we do not see them and hear them and answer them. We will so live the little life; it is impossible to make some of us large. What a pity it is that we have any senses! We limit all things by them. Yea, we lay these senses upon God, and cramp him within their poor limits. We build ourselves little houses, instead of living on the mountains. And we cannot be driven out of this. Man must build walls. It is in his very blood. He says it is the climate, but it is something far more subtle and spiritual than the weather. Man must build; he must have a roof, he will not live in the open air. He soon gets frightened, too, by messengers of his own sending. For a long time after he had subscribed to the telegraph he dare hardly open the telegram. He knew that it could only be a messenger of woe. Even the head of the house trembled all over when he saw anything different from the ordinary letter. He has got used to it now: so he expects the telegram and cares nothing about

it ; but the very next messenger that science devises and sends to him will turn him as white as ever. He is curious, he is foolish ; he will not be large, he will not have the horizon for his cage, he will build a little wire-prison for himself, and when he is looking out of it he thinks he himself is not within it. The air is full of messages—ay, full of messengers. It is a busy air. We think the business is under our feet and round about us, simply because the noise is there. We are fond of noise. When there is a great noise we think something is going on : whereas we are wholly wrong. All the great things are done in silence. The sun made no noise when he lifted himself up in the air this morning and looked the night away. Why will we not take all things into our purview ? Why will we live under our own church roof ? Why have a roof at all ? We suffocate ourselves, and complain of the weather. There are some people who are afraid to open a window. To shut a window is blasphemy. No matter where the wind comes from it is God's wind, and has blown over God's garden, and has brought with it spices and fragrances, and hints and tones. We ought to take in that grateful hospitality. It seems to be the business of man to make all things little. He dare not take in the largeness of things, or all his theology would be changed, and his whole life would be lifted up in a new ennoblement.

How does God put the case himself ? He always so represents himself as never to be less than we are. Yet we will make him exactly of our own stature. We make God in our image and our likeness ; we invert the process ; we are to ourselves as gods. What is the great speech ? " My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways." How then—"for as the heaven,"—that is where we have made the mistake. We have thought it

must be analogical; we have said it must be somewhat after the same pattern; and yet the Lord has thundered down from his high tabernacle, "for as the heaven is high above the earth, so,"—we have admitted that "so" as an adverb, a particle of grammar, but we have not admitted it as the root of a new philosophy, the beginning and the end of a sublime possibility. Yet man must always have his little ghosts. He does not mind having a whole bookful of ghost stories; but even then he does not like to read his book at night. He would not mind reading it on a sunny day by the seaside when there was a band within easy hearing, but no soul on earth could get him to read a word of it after supper. He will not ignore the spiritual, but he will keep it where he pleases, and approach it when he desires so to do. Thus we lose the Cross, where all the angels are: thus we lose the Christian thought that fills the air with life and makes that life angelic, saying, "Are they not all servants, waiting servants, winged servants, watching men's lives as if men's lives were precious?" Samuel did not know where the voice came from. Every man has some other man who is greater than he, and the type of the larger life. So little Samuel looked up to old Eli and felt sure that nobody else could have called for him at night. Some other boy might have mentioned his name in the morning, but only the venerable priest could have called that name at night. Mark how the reason is given in the fascinating story: "for Samuel knew not yet the Lord"; Samuel had not got the key of things; he was fumbling about with his fingers, and could open nothing. Until a man knows the Lord he knows nothing, he has no key; he cannot open a door; he can make no progress. God is the key of everything; live, move, and have your being in God, and then as for your ghosts let them come a thousand thick, they can only be clothed with white, and

they can only talk the native tongue of heaven : but have no God, no Father, no spirit-key, and the very least imp can frighten the very strongest Hercules. "Samuel knew not yet the Lord"; presently he would come into possession of that fact, and then all his way would shine with heaven's light, and all his life would become a solemn duty, with its occasional drinkings of the wine of love, and its occasional festivals as if in the very presence of God,—occasional, because there was to be darkness enough, trouble enough. The little priest came into trouble very soon. Shame be to that priest who has not graduated in the university of sorrow. A man of letters!—say if there be any greater nuisance under all God's broad sun than a man who is only a man of letters, and who has not used his letters to the advantage of reading the human heart, understanding human life, and assisting human aspiration to become human prayer.

Messengers are always coming from society. They are messengers we do not want to admit. Here is a messenger called Poverty. Poverty was sent to you, and you shut the door in its face, you know you did ; you told Poverty that you had so many claims. Who was the man that lifted up his eyes in hell? Was he a man who had wrong theological notions? Was he a man who did not understand the constitution of the Godhead? Was he a man who had some speculative difficulties about the Trinity? It is not so said in the Book : "And a rich man died, and in hell he lifted up his eyes." There is not a theological word about either Dives or Lazarus ; they might neither of them ever have gone to church or chapel, to use a modern expression. Here was a man who shut himself within folding doors, twice the usual thickness ; the messenger was at the door, and he was left there.

"And there came a messenger unto Dives," and Dives drunk another goblet of red wine, and let the dogs keep the messenger company. Here is another messenger, while he is yet speaking, pale—his face marred, the plough of grief having ripped up the whole surface of the countenance, the eyes eloquent in appeal; Pain has a long tale to tell, and it will tell the tale in tremulous tones, and we will not allow ourselves to hear it. We allow Pain the whole acreage of solitude in which to tell its grief. And here is poor Perplexity at the door; shall we admit Perplexity to tell its message? The man does not know what to do; he says, "My condition is this: on the one side there are reasons, upon the other side there are reasons, and I cannot tell which of the reasons are greater, and I want you to assist me, for my poor brain is in a momentary muddle, I cannot see things as I used to see them; once I had some degree of penetration, now I have none, and my things are all entangled and complicated; can I tell you my whole story, and will you advise me?" "Why," you say, "your whole time would be taken up if you did so." I do not know how some men's time could be better taken up. There are so many men spending their days in painting cherry-stones that it would really be of advantage to them if they could sometimes listen to poverty, to pain, to perplexity, to little children. Busy!—my lords, with what? There is a business that is frivolity.

Consider this case well, lest you be fooling away your time when the messengers are at the door with words from God. We can of course play the fool if we like, and hear none of them. It always lies within human possibility to see nothing, to hear nothing, to know nothing. "If thou say, Behold, I knew it not: doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it?" Men are not at liberty

to know nothing. Nowhere in the whole charter of human right and liberty hath God written one syllable to entitle a man to hide himself from his own flesh when he cries out either with the appeal of necessity or with the tone of a new revelation from God. It is perfectly possible to live in the greatest city in the world and know nothing about it. Ask a number of people whether does happiness or misery preponderate in the world, and probably in the majority of instances the answer would be that happiness is preponderant. There may be a sense in which that is true; so wondrously has God constituted life that I have seen children laughing where some of us would find nothing but disappointment and bitterness and great woe. We hardly must reckon the children in when we take a census of the world's condition as to happiness and misery. The children can be happy anywhere. I have seen little ragged urchins in London who really seemed as if they cared nothing for foreign politics. I saw a little boy, I think yesterday or the day before, the very picture of woebegoneness as to dress; it is simply inconceivable how the things were ever got on to him, and still more inconceivable how they could ever be got off him. But there he was with the inevitable jug, and looking round as if everything was about as he would have made it if he had been asked about it. There was no sorrow on his face, only mud; there was no sign of taking any interest whatever either in Great Britain or Ireland. I would hardly, therefore, reckon him in when I was asking the question, whether does happiness or misery preponderate. I said as I passed him, "That boy may one day be Prime Minister of England; you cannot tell what is in that head." I always make friends of these little folks when I can. I saw one poor little fellow taking his sister along the road, and I never saw such walking

in my life. The little boy might be five or six years old, and he had his father's shoes on ; and to see how that little boy got along was something which once seen could never, never be forgotten ; it will be laughter for me, in one sense, on my gloomiest day. I never recall that scene without getting lifted up out of some momentary glumness : and yet at the heart of it how sad, how pitiful, how wrong ! I could hardly get him downstairs into the little shop to feed him with cakes because he had to come in such a very awkward way and kept us all against our will riotously laughing at the sight of the boy. Of course you can pass these children and never see them. You need not take any note of poverty ; you can always go by the main thoroughfare.

There is sorrow enough in any city in this country at this moment to make a perdition of. Do we listen to it, search it out ? Are we eyes to the blind and feet to the lame and a tongue to the dumb, and do we open our eloquent lips for the speechless ? We need not hear anything about the world's groaning and moaning ; we can avoid it all ; we can listen to nothing but music that pleases us, and when it is over we can hurry home again so as to hear nothing on the road of a disagreeable kind : or we can so live as to die of very sympathy. Fill yourselves with the facts of the world. I care not what you may know about centuries dead and gone if you as ministers of Christ and Churches of Christ do not hear the living tragical messages of this day and answer them. Away with your prating and your piety and your refinement and your culture if they do not all focus themselves upon the immediate necessity, the infinite pain of human experience. The great difficulty is lest we begin our listening to the messengers, spiritual and social, at the

wrong end, and think of them only when they are relating to us little messages ; then we are afraid of them, or we under-estimate their importance. Our first communion should be with God ; then out of that fellowship let there come what may ; all the rest is then under our hand, easily within our grasp. We can so touch it as Christ would have touched it with all his healing gentleness, with all his omnipotent compassion. If we are wrong there we are wrong everywhere. If our communion with God has been interrupted, or is set in a false key, or circulates round unworthy objects, if we have debased prayer into speculation, and if we have made an idol of theology when we ought to have made an object of philanthropy, then our lives are lived upside down ; their purpose will end in abortive efforts where they might have ended in great victories for Christ. How do we stand with God ? What is our relation to the infinite ? Do we come out of the eternal to do the work of the temporal ? It is not enough that we should walk through time into eternity, we should so live as to come out of eternity into time ; then the world would be but as a speck of dust to carry, all its burdensomeness would be gone, and we should be wrought up into such a state of spiritual enthusiasm and devotion as not to feel things that are at this moment anxieties and pains and torments unendurable. If men will take hold of things from the wrong end, they cannot make life harmonious and beneficent. He that hath ears to hear let him hear the messenger. Thou shalt hear a voice behind thee : thou shalt hear a voice in thine heart : thou shalt hear a voice, but see no man : that voice will say to thee, " This is the way, walk in it." There shall come a voice out of the clouds saying, " This is my beloved Son, believe ye him." There shall come a voice in the night-time saying, " Samuel, Samuel !" —the very tone a prophecy,

the very tone a heartbreaking pathos. When the Lord called Samuel there were tears in his voice because he was about to pronounce judgment.

How often have we had occasion to say that few men hear! The preacher is placed at an infinite disadvantage, because his congregation do not listen to him. They think they do, but they do not. Only one man probably in a great number can listen. No jury can listen as a judge can; his hearing has been trained; he hears the little tones, the minor sentences; he hears that which is most softly expressed; he distributes the emphasis aright; his is a cultured, critical ear. There are others whose minds are so lightning-like that they do not give the speaker an opportunity to complete his sentence; they think they know what he is going to say: whereas he is going to say the exact contrary; and thus they miss the music. They hear a loud word here and there, but the undulation of sound, the splash of the tidal action of the voice, they know nothing about. They hear roughly, therefore they judge unwisely. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." He must have more than the nominal faculty. There is hearing *and* hearing. There is a hearing of the word, and a hearing of the tone, and a hearing of the spirit within the tone: only he who hears that spirit hears the message. Awake! If you must use your senses, use them in their highest import, and in their highest possibilities of action. So hear as to hear the inner voice; so see as to behold the shape within the form. This is the gift of God. The Lord has always had in his little earth hearing men and seeing men, who have been misunderstood and nick-named and travestied; but they have been the real leaders of the world, and for their comfort we have told them that they

would be better understood two hundred years after than they are to-day ; to-day we starve them, two hundred years hence we will memorialise them. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

Who is God's messenger pre-eminently and uniquely? The Messenger of the covenant, Jesus Christ by human name. He is God's Messenger, he is the Gospel, and he preached Gospel. Other gospel there is none, other teacher there is none, in any final and complete sense. All other teachers that have taught truly have been first taught of God. It seems an easy thing to say that there is only one God and all the rest are idols : in a narrow sense that is true ; there may be only one literature and all the rest may be trifling letters and sentences ; but there is not a sentence in which there is not some literary import if we could truly read it ; and the one God hath spoken at divers times and in sundry manners. I like to find God in heathen lands ; I like to show men who suppose themselves to be atheists that God has not left himself even in their consciousness without witness. I would so interpret nature and life as to find surprises of a divine kind everywhere, and lead men to say, "Lo, God is here, and I knew it not : I thought I was alone, yet the whole air is God's pavilion : this is the house of the Living One." There are some little glints of wisdom in your ignorance ; there are some outlines of prayer in your repudiation of worship. You cannot get rid of God. He is in you, and round about you, in some form, and he sends his messengers and messages to you in some way, known or unknown as the case may be : but there they are. What is the greatest message of all? God's love : "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whoso-

ever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." That is the greatest message of all. "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus is come into the world to save sinners." All other messages halt until that sublime music has uttered its eloquence.

PHASES OF TEXTS.

THE EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS.

CHAPTER I.

"PAUL and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ [the most royal title which human beings can assume], to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons [the saints take precedence of the bishops and deacons, forasmuch as character is immortal, while office is but temporary]."

Verses 2, 3. "Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." [All blessing is with the Absolute: even the chief of the apostles can only bless ministerially, not primarily.] "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you." [My whole remembrance of you is accompanied with thanks to God.—*Alford.*]

(1) "Remembrance" is a very heaven or hell. Memory is the genius that ever follows a man persistently as his own shadow, and essentially as his own blood. A man of gladsome recollections can never be absolutely alone. The Philippians were a perpetual

joy to the Apostle. Whenever he took an excursion across the mountains and through the valleys of his gone lifetime, he caught sight of the benevolent and loving Philippians, and their very names gladdened him, as a long-absent traveller might be gladdened by the glittering pinnacles of the city of his home.

(2) Think of the beauty of the circumstance that Paul thanked God for the blessing of kind, loving, helpful men. Man can bless man. Hearts can bring the burning dawn into hearts that have been saddened through a weary night-time. Man serves God by aiding God's servants.

(3) The more enlarged and susceptible the heart, the more easily can service be rendered to it. It is easier to win the benediction of a great and noble heart than of a withered and sapless bone. Look at Elisha and the woman of Shunem; see how Christ brightened into a fuller orb'd divinity when he blessed the woman for her one box of

nard ; and see how Paul prostrated himself before God when he remembered the little kindnesses of the Philippians.

(4) Learn how good a thing it is to serve the great, and, inferentially, how sublime a thing it is to live and die in the service of the Greatest. If Paul remembered the benefactions of his friends, he has also placed on record this testimony: "God is not unrighteous to forget your work of faith and labour of love." In both cases it is a question of memory. The Apostle remembers, and God remembers; so that the deeds of the good are rewarded with immortal honour. [Turn this argument upon the man who never does a good deed! Will God forget him?]

(5) Each of us should leave a memory that shall be cherished and blessed. A pleasant recollection of the Philippians would be immortal as the consciousness of the Apostle. A noble and honourable life is not necessarily made up of great efforts—stupendous and exhausting attempts to achieve some dazzling victory,—but of little acts of consideration, well timed smiles of encouragement and hope, gentle words of sympathy, and generous interpretations of conduct. The sun does not wait until he can blaze forth in the pomp and glory of mid-day: first the herald streak ;

the shaping off and fringing of the slumberous clouds; the purple beauty; the multiplying and conquering fire; until noon is king, and day has forgotten night! Begin humbly. If we cannot articulate an apostle's prayer, we may heave a brother's sigh. Not one of us, how hidden and feeble soever, need live a sterile life.

(6) Every man must determine for himself whether he will so live that "every remembrance" of him shall induce thankfulness to God, or his name be a burden which memory would willingly cast off.

(7) The Apostle stands prominently forth as an illustrious man, while the Philippians are not known to us by more than their general name. The hidden workers are not on that account to deem themselves useless. Where would the oak be but for hidden and invisible agents? How much is the teacher who guides others to heaven indebted even for some of his most effective qualifications to the general influence of those who make his house a home, and whose names are not registered on the scrolls of fame!

Verses 4, 5. "Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request for joy, for your fellowship in the Gospel from the first day until now."

Prayer may be varied according

to the different spiritual moods of the suppliant. In some instances prayer may hardly rise beyond a mere duty; in other cases it may become the supreme joy of the heart. In this instance the Apostle assures the Philippians that he experienced the most exquisite joy in remembering them before God in prayer: as if, in the overflowing of his affection, he always made haste to intercede for them, and lingered joyfully in pleading for their growth and happiness. Man cannot always pray in the same mood. Sometimes the intercessor may "rejoice in spirit," and sometimes he may groan and be troubled. The mood need not impair the sincerity. You may perform the same journey through a thick and troubled atmosphere, as well as through the brightness and calm of the summer light: the path is the same, the goal is the same, the purpose is the same; yet in the one case the soul may sit as a bird with folded wings, and in the other it may be soaring and singing through the streaming glory.

"Your fellowship in the Gospel" I take to signify their unanimity, their entireness of accord one with another; and I see no reason why the Apostle himself should not be included in that "fellowship." This expansion of the idea (which I cannot see to be forbidden, even by the grammar of the passage) would suggest the

centralising influence of God's redeeming and sanctifying idea. No agent, no principle, no doctrine has done so much, or can do so much, in the education and consolidation of heart-power as the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul thanks God with joy for the "fellowship of the Gospel" among the Philippians; *i.e.*, for their mutual accord, their oneness, their brotherhood of spirit and action. This may so far exhaust the grammatical signification of the language; but the fact that the Apostle is joyfully thankful for this unanimity among the Philippians shows that he himself was one with them, and this circumstance brings us into the presence of the sublime idea that Christianity is the most influential of all heart-uniting forces. Men who are one in Christ are united in the highest ranges of their nature. They are not one necessarily in the lower and temporary appetences of their manhood, but in the vitalities of their being. Death cannot break the seal that binds the friendships of the good. Distance cannot divide the sympathetic. Paul is in Rome; his friends at Philippi: but in the great globe-heart of the Apostle, Rome and Philippi are but different names of the same place. The union of the Church is guaranteed by the immortality of the principles on which it is founded. The moral is the immortal.

Verse 6. "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

Whether this "good work" relates entirely to the special act of beneficence which had called forth this epistle may be fairly disputed. Taken upon this narrow ground, the Apostle's joyfulness and thankfulness in prayer would be but the refinement of selfishness. As will appear in the sequel, the Philippians had sent some substantial token of their appreciation of the Apostle's labours; but to limit this expression of confidence to such a display of affection would be to impoverish and circumscribe the passage. The Apostle lays down a great principle respecting the divine method of working—viz., to begin is to finish; and that principle, wide enough to encompass the universe, will also comprehend every detail and punctilio of Christian service. (1) God works by a plan;—his plan is to prepare manhood for the final day, "the day of Jesus Christ" (by which may be signified a period of time or a perfection of development; the "day" of death and judgment, or the day of completeness in Christian manhood). (2) God is not fickle in the prosecution of his purposes; he begins, not that he may conduct an experiment, but that he may perform a design. (3) God has so revealed himself in history

in the education of the individual and the training of society as to justify the most emphatic expression of "confidence" on the part of his Church. The past foretells the future. God hath made his servants masters of the ages, so far as certainty with respect to his own method and purpose of government are concerned. The creature of a day is thus enabled to speak with "confidence" of the outgoings of the Eternal.

The past is the only tangible and visible prophet that God hath left in his Church. When the world was young the world needed Elijahs, Ezekiels, and Daniels; but the richer the world becomes in history, the bolder and louder and sweeter will be its tone of "confidence." God cannot publish any amended edition of himself. You may, therefore, make the past the source of the widest inferences.

Verse 7. "Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the Gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace."

The sixth verse was like the peal of a trumpet the seventh is the low, sweet music of the summer morning. There is an expression here of singular beauty: "I have you in my heart." Who can measure the circumference of a truly philanthropic heart? Has

arithmetic any cunning art by which to calculate the girth of that organ of affection? A man in Rome carrying the Philippian Church in his heart! (1) He who carries the world elsewhere than in his heart will soon wish to cast off his burden. (2) He who carries the good in his heart can never be desolate. Loneliness is an impossibility to the well stored heart. (3) He whose heart is engaged with the tender offices of affection is the profoundest interpreter and the most efficient servant of mankind. (4) He who enshrines his benefactors in his heart has broken the dominion of selfishness.

In this verse the Apostle recurs to the wider idea of the "fellowship of the Gospel," which was suggested in connection with the fifth verse: "Inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the Gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace." The Apostle and the Philippians being one in their faith in Christ, were one also in their love of each other. Being one with the Apostle in Christ, they were one with him in all the vicissitudes of his experience. He refers to himself as in two different situations: in the one he was bound as a prisoner; in the other he was defending and confirming the Gospel. In each case the Philippians were "partakers of his grace." ~ (1) The

advocacy of the best of causes may bring a man into social humiliation. (2) Social humiliation does not necessarily involve moral dishonour. (3) While the morally honourable are suffering from social humiliation, they will not be abandoned by the "partakers" of the same "grace." Another proof of the uniting and consolidating force of Christianity.

Verse 8. "For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ." [All real spiritual love is but a portion of the great love wherewith he hath loved us, which lives and yearns in all who are vitally united to him.—*Alford*.]

Saints "longing" for saints is a prophecy that all saints are destined to be brought into one assembly. God will satisfy all the desires which he creates; he will feed the soul which he has made hungry; and as he has given us the spirit of true fellowship, so will he supply the means of its full enjoyment. Out of all this comes heaven. The good "longing" for the good; the creature yearning for the Creator; the redeemed sighing for the Redeemer; the dew of the morning trembling with the hope of being taken up by the Infinite Light: what is all this but a premonition of celestial life?

The Apostle, having thus told the Philippians of his praying and his longing, presents a summary of his prayer:

Verses 9-11. "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."

In one word, the Apostle prayed that the Philippians might grow. It will be found to consist with the first principles of human nature that moral dwarfs never pray that others may become moral giants. "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he." A man cannot transcend himself. The loftier and purer a man's aspirations are, the more noble and divine is the man. Only the firmament can embrace the stars!

(1) The Apostle prays that "love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment"; that love may abound in "moral tact" (De Wette). True love is intelligent. We are to love God with all our mind. As knowledge is the basis of faith, so also it is the first condition of love.

(2) "That ye may approve things that are excellent." The Apostle prays for an enlargement and quickening of the discriminative faculty, that the Philippians might distinguish between things that differ, and that so distinguishing they might elect the right. A

man is known by his verdicts. The poet sees a deeper reading in the leaves of the summer than the thoughtless man, who sees nothing in them but a day's bread for a day's work. The artist sees where the clown but looks. Paul wished the faculty of discrimination to be so quickened that the Philippians might ever see the "excellent," and instantly approve it. The more we love Christ, the more will we be qualified to perceive every charm in moral life. He who truly approves the excellent will constantly defend the excellent, and thus a perfect "fellowship" in the Gospel will be established throughout the Church.

(3) "That ye may be sincere and without offence [without stumbling.—*Alford*] till the day of Christ." The word "sincere" has a double meaning. Take the word from the Greek, and it signifies that which is proved in the sunlight. An article may be held so that the rays of the sun may reveal any defect or flaw in the substance or the manufacture. Christians are to be so true that the solar light of infinite rectitude cannot find any stain or derangement in their character. Take the word from the Latin, and the literal signification is without wax; the reference being to clarified honey, which is free from all admixture: all is pure. The Christian life is to be so

refined, so clarified, as to be thoroughly free from all foreign elements.

(4) "Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." The Apostle, beginning at the centre, finds his way to the circumference; beginning with the spiritual, he culminates in the practical. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." "I am the Vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing." See the connection between Christ and fruit. Christ bids his people bring forth "much fruit": have his people merit, then? The answer is, "Without me ye can do nothing." Where is boasting?

This call to practical life shows that Christianity is not a mocking pretence or a theological dream or a speculative science, but a sublime, vital, and vitalising reality.

The doctrines acknowledged in this prayer are: (1) That Christian life is progressive—"more and more." (2) That God is ready to co-operate with his people for their moral enrichment. (3) That the entire Christian manhood is to bear fruit—"being filled."

Verses 12-14. "But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel; so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; and many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear."

The Philippians looked upon the imprisonment as a calamity; Paul assures them that it was an element of prosperity. This shows how much our estimate of men and things depends upon the angle from which we conduct the examination. Circumstances are often the only lexicons which can determine the meaning of words. While the Philippians were saying "midnight" the Apostle was saying "noon": "ruin" at Philippi meant "coronation" at Rome. Can the man at the mountain-foot see as far as the man on the mountain-head? Much depends on the plane of vision as well as upon the optical power. There is a germ of prophecy here—by-and-by we shall see life from higher standpoints. Here is a light which the student would do well to hold over his darkest problems; viz., It is better to study at Rome than at Philippi; better under the crowned arch of day than under the black bridge of night!

The idea to be dwelt upon most emphatically is, That cir-

cumstances the most untoward may in reality be advancing the divine kingdom among men. The fact is known at Philippi, but the interpretation must come from Rome. This idea may be generalised so as to encompass all God's government. Thus generalised it would stand, Not one of the divine purposes can ultimately fail of completion. Every purpose of God that is to take effect in the moral sphere may be thwarted, but the outcome of the ages will show that God's great plan has been realised in every tittle. God will redeem his promise to his anointed. He will cause all the historic lines to converge in the redemptive idea. We cannot see all that he is doing. We wonder and weep at Philippi; but from the Rome of the heavens he says, "All things fall out unto the furtherance of the Gospel."

(1) God's providence not to be interpreted in fragments. (2) The moral is higher than the personal: Paul is in prison, but the Gospel is free! (3) The bonds of one man may give inspiration to the liberty of another; "many of the brethren waxed confident." (4) The spread of the Gospel depends upon no one man. (5) Even the afflicted Christian has a mission. Paul's "bonds" were the means of making the Gospel more and more known.

Verses 15-18. "Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: the one preach Christ of contention [self-seeking], not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds; but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the Gospel. What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice."

(1) Diverse developments of human disposition. (2) The possibility of doing a good deed through a bad motive. (3) The impossibility of entirely concealing motives. (4) The actions of self-seekers turned into the good man's source of joy. (5) Man is never so diabolised as when making a good cause the means of grieving and tormenting the Church. (6) The mere fact that a man preaches Christ is not a proof of his personal salvation; and if this can be affirmed of preaching, how much more powerfully may it be affirmed of hearing!

This paragraph furnishes matter for a discourse on two voices on the same subject; or, the voice of selfishness and the voice of love.

Verse 19. "For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ."

(1) Mark the confidence of the declaration, "I know." Not an angel in heaven could utter a

truer note of triumph. Righteousness is a prophetic power. The righteous man can infallibly predict the issue of moral operation.

(2) Mark the ground of this confidence; "this shall turn to my salvation." What is the "this" referred to? The preaching of Christ. The Apostle's joy does not arise from the fact that certain persons preached, but from the higher fact that Christ was preached. It was impossible that the Apostle could rejoice that bad men were working: he rejoiced that a good work was being done.

(3) Mark that the extension of the truth is the best guarantee of personal happiness. The Apostle knew that the less comprehended the greater as truly in one department as in another. To him moral victory meant personal deliverance. A man of less moral grandeur would have started the argument from himself, saying, with selfish vaunt, "Let me be free, and then the Gospel shall triumph": he would have pivoted the question on himself; but the Apostle knew nothing of such littleness and self-idolatry; he said, "Let Christ be preached, and Christ's servant shall in due time be free. When it goes well with the master it goes well with the servant." I believe that the word "salvation" does not relate to the safety of his soul, but to the deliverance of his body; and, accepting the word in that sense,

I can overhear the Apostle, as he gathers his chain closer around him, saying, "The truth shall break these links. Some of those men outside are doing other than they set out to do: God will turn their purposes upside down. They thought to harden and fasten these links, whereas they are in very deed breaking them! Let them go on; let Christ be more and more talked about, and more and more understood, and then that prison door shall fall back, and I shall be free as the light!" When the Church acts on this great principle, there will be less fuss, less anxiety for the truth, less quaking about little personal interests, less self-protrusion and self-applause. Rightly looked at, no man is so truly serving himself as when he is magnanimously endeavouring to serve others, (4) Mark that the Gospel has everything to hope from being allowed to reveal its own credentials. Proclaim it (ministers, missionaries, teachers)! It sounds well from any lips (philosophers, babes and sucklings, unlearned). By whomsoever pronounced, the celestial fire will strike through every syllable, and the place of its proclamation shall be sacred as the Mount of God! (5) Mark that the Apostle associates this result ("my salvation") with the prayers of the Philippians. Not a man in the Church is so far advanced as to be beyond the

range of prayer. Intercession embraces all human kind! See how the greatest man in the Church may be served by the supplication of the good. A child may help an apostle. (Such is the mystery of moral power.)

Verses 20, 21. "According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

(1) "Expectation" and "hope" these are words which connect the heart with the future. (2) No power can so light up the future, and throw over it the hues of immortal beauty, as childlike trust in God. (3) The man who is living without "expectation" and "hope" is living only half a life; but he who is living on false expectations and false hopes is wasting life. (4) It is right that the body should be turned to moral account. (Christ purchased the whole man.) The passions are not to have their own wild way. The blood is not to be master of the man. (5) The possibility of being ready for either earthly or heavenly life. Paul drew his programme of life from the heart of the Saviour. He lighted his torch at the sun! (6) Vital identification with Christ is the secret of such readi-

ness. "For to me to live is Christ,"—I have one idea; I live Christ! I reproduce the Saviour; I am ever in pursuit of the objects which engage His affections; I and my Saviour are one.

That which a man loves supremely is that for which he lives (money, fame, pleasure, etc.). The lofty altitude of moral nature to which we have to aspire is to find in Christ our only reason for living. Apart from this, the yearnings, aspirations, and voids of humanity can never be satisfied. (1) Life in Christ comprehends all true life (science, art, beauty, music, all that adorns the saint, all that strengthens the worker, all that sustains the sufferer). A life rooted in Christ will bear all manner of fruits, and be beautiful with all the hues of heaven. Into what base are our life-roots struck? (2) Life in Christ can see the ulterior phase of what men call death. "To die is gain." The eye of true life can see clear through the dispensation of dying, and behold the "gain"; can see straight through the troubled night of the final act of man upon earth, and gladden itself with the sight of the morning glory that falls for ever on the hills of heaven. To die is mystery; to die is speculation; to die is life's most desperate venture; to die is life's annihilation; this is the creed of those whose life is not centred in

Christ. (Compare this creed with the "gain" which Christianity discloses.)

Verses 22-26. "But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; that your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again."

(1) The personal weighed with the public, or the difficulties of the veteran philanthropist. (2) Man's sublimest reason for not wishing immediate translation to glory is that he may be of spiritual service to the world. (3) The next best condition to that of being "with Christ" in heaven is to be working for Christ's people on earth. Paul puts two things in opposition; viz., "to be with Christ," and "to abide with you": how could there be hesitation in deciding the choice? Selfishness could not have hesitated. True; but selfishness would never have been called upon to make the election. Benevolence has its difficulties as well as selfishness. Love lifts a finger to the heavens, and points another to the earth. The choice is between "gain" and service, and rightly estimated service is gain. It is worth all

pain and inconvenience to remain out of heaven so long as you can prepare your contemporaries for the skies. You are "with Christ" so long as you are with his work: there is, indeed, a fuller revelation to be made—there is a veil to be passed—yet the union is begun. Our eyes are holden, that we should not know him; but his breath is our life, and his touch our omnipotence. The Apostle is not a dreamy contemplatist, who is always wishing for some more pleasant conditions of existence. He is a worker who finds satisfaction in labour and joy in anticipation. There is a disease in the Church for which I can find no appropriate name; it may, however, be described symptomatically. Persons who are afflicted with it seem to think that religion consists in wishing for heaven. They hold their heads so erectly as not to see the spiritual darkness, the moral lunacy, the social disintegration by which they are surrounded. They are dreamers, contemplatists, transcendentalists; but are they Christians? They are fond of hymns that warble the blessedness of heaven; they revel in texts that describe the rest, the pleasure, the music, the serenity, the fascinations of the celestial state. Let such diseased ones mark how the Apostle conjoins such words as "labour" and "gain," and how he balances what is "needful" for man with what would be pleasant

to himself; and let them be rebuked and stimulated by the joy with which he anticipated restoration to the laborious life of the apostolate. (4) There is only one world in which you can serve man evangelically; do not be in indecent haste to escape the opportunity! When you wish to enter heaven, may you have a strong drawing to the service which is still to be done on earth; may you be "in a strait." (5) God never leaves the earth entirely destitute of great men. Elijah may deem himself alone, not knowing that there are seven thousand children of truth who have never kissed the world's dumb god.

Verses 27-30. "Only let your conversation [citizenship] be as it cometh the Gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel; and in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which [faith of the Gospel] is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; having the same conflict which ye saw in me [when I was at Philippi (Acts xvi.)], and now hear to be in me."

This is a call to a threefold manifestation of spiritual life: (a) to holiness; (b) to unanimity; (c) to courage.

I. TO HOLINESS.—"Only let

your conversation be as it cometh the Gospel of Christ." As if he had said, "I have one dominating wish in reference to you," or, "This is my highest desire on your behalf." It is well to know what God's princes wish for us. This is a voice from the highest range of Christian experience. The noblest desire which one man can cherish for another is that he may be like Jesus. There is but one ideal life in the Church. Here, however, is a difficulty; how can the lowest copy the highest? Why put an absolutely perfect design before a pupil devoid of culture and devoid of skill? Would it not have been wiser to have set forth a man who excelled in one moral feature, and to have said, "Copy that"? and then to have presented a second, who exemplified another beauty, and to have said, "Transcribe that"? and so on until all the graces had been gradually acquired? Would not such an arrangement have encouraged desponding man? Instead of this we have set before us as our example absolute perfection—infinite holiness! Is not this exorbitant? Is it not demanding too much of the crushed and helpless sinner? Let us see. What does moral perfection begin in? It begins in the disposition, in the will, in the heart. If you are urged to escape from polar winter, with its ice and snow and frost and barren-

ness, to tropical summer, with its warmth and flowers and geniality and luxuriance, is it meant that you are to accomplish the journey at one long stride, or that it is to be completed step by step, little by little? When a child is required to become perfect as a musician, is it intended that in one day his uncrafty fingers shall liberate the angel-strains that are jailed in the musical instrument? Or is it meant that he shall master the gamut, and grope his way through the scale, and gently touch the unknown notes to ascertain, as if by a whisper, whether they are the strains of which he is in quest, and proceed with all diligence and zeal until the instrument shall tell all its secrets, and shake with many voiced delight at the touch of his friendly hand? Were you to tell an acorn to become perfect as an oak, would you mean that all the growing was to be completed in a night, or that the development was to proceed gradually, unfolding branch after branch, bud after bud, leaf after leaf, till it became a great cathedral-tree, in which the feathered choristers should pour out their songs in the hearing of God? It is even so with our Saviour. When he tells us to be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect, he means that we are to grow in grace; we are to "press toward the mark"; we are to set our faces towards the holy temple.

Not only so. In all our growing and striving, Christ himself is with us, and his grace is all-sufficient. "Work out your own salvation," etc. Be it far from me to speak harshly to any man struggling after higher manhood. My own forty days in the wilderness are not yet finished. Satan is still with me, etc.

II. TO UNANIMITY.—"That ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind serving together for the faith of the Gospel." Monotony is not what is meant by unanimity. What is the root of true unity? We are one in our love and service of Christ. Christendom is in reality one, though apparently many. The coat is a coat of many colours, but the heart is one. This is particularly seen in the time of threatened danger. The armies of defence have never come from any particular section of the Church. The young sometimes reason thus: "There is so much division in the Church—there are so many sects, parties, and divisions, that we have determined, therefore (O unhappy and illogical 'therefore'!) to cast off religion altogether." Try this reasoning by analogy. Take it into the question of architecture, and the parallel would be this: "There are so many styles of building, and so many modifications and interpenetrations of those styles,—some houses are

round and some square, some Doric and some Gothic,—that we are really so perplexed with the varieties that we have renounced architecture altogether, and have resolved to reside day and night in the open air!" Try it again in the matter of clothing, and run the analogy. Try it in the question of patriotism, and the endless shades of political party, etc. Do men give up business because some tradesmen become insolvent? etc. Do you give up housekeeping because some chimneys smoke? etc.

III. TO COURAGE.—"And in nothing terrified by your adversaries." "Unto you it is given to suffer." If a man is not to be terrified by his "adversaries," by whom is he to be terrified? Timidity is a symptom of moral feebleness. Timidity is an impediment in the path of moral progress. Timidity on the part of one may dishearten the courage of a multitude. Timidity arises from distrust of God. There is not a passage in all God's word in favour of timidity. "Straight on!" is God's command, and He will frighten the lions from before your feet. The strong in heart are called to suffer. Suffering is education; suffering is a means of grace. There is a martyrdom of the body; there is a deeper martyrdom of the spirit. Think of the hidden and silent heroism

that is going on every day. How many a man, otherwise mighty, fails in suffering! How many a man, too, of noble powers and enlarged culture, for want of strength in a crisis—the courage to utter a decisive word—fails and trembles, and becomes the prey of the mean! The Apostle here teaches that fearlessness in strife is to be associated with magnanimity in endurance.

CHAPTER II. I-II.

Verses 1, 2. "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind."

(1) The "if" is not in this case the sign of doubt or hesitation, but, on the contrary, the sign of the most assured certainty. When persons wish to declare the vastness of an assembly, they sometimes make use of such an expression as, "If there was one man present, there were two thousand"; the "if" being not the word of doubt, but of certainty. As employed by Paul, it is equivalent to, "If there is any water in the sea, or if there is any light in the sun."

(2) Consolation, comfort of love, fellowship of the Spirit, bowels and mercies are expressions which signify much in common. This

appeal of the Apostle is a burst of tenderness. Affection delights in repetition. Love amplifies its expressions to the utmost. Love is an eloquent rhetorician; artless, yet full of art. These are expressions full of summer light and beauty, which are revealed only to the eye of the heart.

(3) Paul having laid his basis in the very heart of Christ, makes an appeal: "Fulfil ye my joy." It is right to interject one's personality as an element in an argument for brotherhood and consolidation in the Church. It appears to be an infinite descent from Christ to Paul, but in reality it is no descent; in this argument Christ's purpose and Paul's desire are identical. The soul has moods which bring it close to the heart of God. Paul appears before the Philippians more as a saint than as a logician, and in that capacity Christ and the "servant" are one. The Apostle likens his "joy" to a cup that is nearly full, and intimates that unanimity in the Church would fill it perfectly—would make it overflow. See the importance even of a single element. An atom may be necessary to perfection. Beauty may depend upon the straightness or curve of a single line.

Verses 3, 4. "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not

every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."

(1) There are two ways of doing even the best work: "through strife," and through love. This was seen in the first chapter, where two classes of preachers are described. (2) Entire sympathy with Christ will always heighten man's appreciation of man. (3) Christianity is thus the only humanising and fraternising religion. (4) Self-seeking is an utter antagonism to the spirit of Christianity. (5) Christianity never encourages a degrading view of human nature. Man is to be "esteemed" by man. Christians are to recognise each other's excellences. Love's eye is quick to detect virtue in another.

Up to this point Paul continues his appeal for unanimity. The spirit of this appeal is most suggestive; it is the spirit of profound and tender sympathy with Christ. When history gives up its dead, it will be found that where the rod has conquered its tens, love has conquered its thousands. This anxiety for entire oneness in the Church is in harmony with the spirit of Christ's intercessory address to the Father. Paul was wont to call for one-mindedness: "I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions

among you ; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." Absence of union is a reflection upon the uniting force. What is the uniting force in a Christian Church ? The love of Christ. Where, then, there is disunion it is plainly to be inferred that there is either not sufficient of this love or that this love is unequal to the exigencies of the case. Hence the grandeur and urgency of the appeal : " If there be therefore any consolation in Christ " ; as though he had said, " Remember that Christ's love is on trial ; consider that men are looking upon you as they would look upon an experiment, and that not you only, but Christ himself, will be deeply involved in the event of failure." How is it that a discordant Church is a reflection upon the moral power of the Saviour ? Without Christ the Church could not be in existence. The world has a right to compare the deeds of the servant with the spirit of the Master, because the connection is moral, and consequently involves responsibility. Take the case on a lower ground. A recently erected edifice has fallen : how do men treat the fact ? They instantly connect it with the architect or the builder. When a chemical experiment has failed, how is it looked upon ? Instantly the manipulator is blamed for want of skill, or for want of judg-

ment in the selection of the quality of his materials. So all the practices of the Church are carried back to Christ, and he is magnified, or " crucified afresh," according to their nature.

While Paul is thus appealing for moral concord, and appealing in the spirit of tenderest love, to what conclusion are we to come on the subject of mutual discipline ? Are charity and justice to be sundered ? Is there not to be a law of right in the Church ? Is the garment of love to be thrown over the leper ? Paul shall answer for himself : " Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned ; and avoid them." " We command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us." The tones vary, but the voice is the same. Was Paul inconsistent ? Are the pleading of love and the crash of condemnation accordant ? It is consistency alone that can afford to be apparently inconsistent. Christ called Herod a fox, and said that Nathanael was without guile. God alone can be warm as summer and chilling as winter. The Apostle is perfectly consistent ; the voice is as truly one as is the voice of the mother when she

sings her child to slumber, or shrieks at the approach of the ravenous beast

Verses 5-11. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." [Carefully compare Revised Version.]

This comprehensive passage, I suggest, can be used for purely theological purposes only by accommodation. Looked at in connection with its surroundings, it appears to be rather a practical exhortation than a theological disquisition. Paul is not arguing a doctrinal point; he is not rebutting doctrinal heresy; there is no evidence that the Philippians held incorrect opinions as to the pre-existence, the divinity, or the incarnation of the Saviour. This summary, therefore, is made, not for purely doctrinal or theological purposes, but as the ground-work of a powerful appeal for the cultivation of a right spirit. This

being clearly understood, the sphere of practical inference is vividly defined. The Apostle takes for granted that the Philippians are sound in the faith. There is nothing in their theological creed to be rectified. There is a practical point to be attained, and in its attainment it is necessary to keep in view all that has been done and the way in which it has been done, by the one Redeeming Life of humanity.

Paul's argument, based upon the Messianic history, may be thrown into some such shape as this: "You, Philippians, have been a great joy to me; I thank my God on every remembrance of you. But my joy is not quite fulfilled: your unanimity is not perfect; I hear of murmurings and disputings among you. I must entreat you in relation to this matter, 'Let this mind be in you, that was also in Christ Jesus.' That mind was condescending, unselfish, most loving. Some of you, perhaps, imagine that you are too elevated and dignified to mingle with others: let me assure you that this is a mistake, and quite contrary to the spirit of Jesus. Christ was infinitely elevated, and yet he stooped; he was of reputation among the highest intelligences, yet he 'made himself of no reputation'; he was 'in the form of God,' yet 'took upon him

the form of a servant.' He is our exemplar; let this mind be in you that was also in him, then nothing shall be done through strife or vainglory, but in lowliness of mind each shall esteem other better than themselves. I speak unto you all, bishops and deacons alike, and declare that we are right and true and influential only as we are moulded after the example of the self-renouncing and condescending Saviour."

This, I submit, is all that was meant by this epitome of Christ's history. So far as the argument was strictly concerned, Paul might have paused at the fifth verse, saying, with all possible condensation of meaning, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." All that follows is illustrative,—is thrown in to give breadth and vividness and precision to the words "this mind." The highest should prove his highness by serving the lowly. There is no elevation too lofty to condescend to the service of the humblest of mankind. This is the great lesson taught by the verses in hand.

That those verses do, by implication and direct statement, teach more it would be useless to deny. They express many of the fundamental truths of Christianity. They declare in plainest terms the pre-existence of Jesus, and his co-equality with the

Father; but they do this in order to invest with commanding attraction and authority a great practical duty. Thus every feature in Christian character may be carried back, so to speak, and examined in the light of the whole history of Christ. In other words, the Christian is always representing or misrepresenting Christ.

(1) Looked at apart from their special signification and application, these delineations of Christ reveal the true method of rendering moral service to man. Human deliverance and progress will remain a theory only until men come to work upon the method here stated. Great philanthropic programmes must begin at Bethlehem, and comprehend the mysteries of Golgotha, if ever they would ascend from Bethany into the heavens. He who would make life a redemptive mission must go to the very base of society, and begin his work there. Men invariably fail when they begin at the high twig rather than the buried root. To serve man, Christ became man. So in serving others we must identify ourselves with them. Christ was in the darkness, but the darkness was not in him. This identification of himself with the human race made Christ accessible to all classes. Man needed for a season—only for a season, as one summer in the year is enough—a

visible manifestation of God. So by coming to us, and being like us, and humbling himself to the death of the Cross, he saved us. We, too, in our philanthropic work must go down. Kings are only the blossoms of the great communal tree. "Down to the roots" is the cry of true philanthropy. (2) Christ's piety was not a mere index-finger. Instead of saying, "That is the way," he said, "I am the way." A man's whole moral vitality must constitute his redeeming power. Men fail when they say "that" instead of "I"; when they give a pronoun instead of the living substantive of their own sanctified character. Instead of seeing how the world's misery looks after it has flowed from a secretarial pen, and taken form upon the clean foolscap of a great society, we should lay our own white hand on the gashed and quaking heart of humanity. (3) Does it not degrade a man to have this personal association with human vice and misery? The answer may be given in a question, "Was Christ degraded?" More; go into the territories of guilt and wretchedness upon any other business than that of Christ, and you will be degraded. A man's spirit will determine his fate. Benevolence will come forth unpolluted as a sunbeam, beautiful as summer's purest flower. (4) Condescension is not degradation. How do you

teach a child to read? By beginning at the rudimentary line; by joining him at the very earliest point of inquiry, and accompanying him patiently through all the introductory processes. So Christ does in the moral education of the race. He speaks in monosyllables as it were. He pronounces words with emphasis, giving each a wide circumference, until every tone penetrates the listener's ear. (5) Are we to come down to men, or are men to be brought up to us? Both! With Christ as our example, I answer, "Be Godlike, and come down to those whom you would save!" "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Not only have we a revelation of the true method of rendering moral service to man, but a revelation of the glory which is in reserve for those who adopt this method. Christ had that glory of right; his followers have it of grace. Christ promises co-equality of exaltation to those who "overcome." They "shall sit with me on my throne." (1) God overrules the most improbable means to the accomplishment of the greatest ends. (2) The true worker is never finally overlooked. "Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great." Why? "Because he hath poured out his soul unto death." In apparent weakness may be the sublimest mystery of power. A man may

be conquering even when in a very passion of suffering.

Verse 12. "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only," etc.

The Apostle must have his "wherefore." This is characteristic of Paul's reasoning. Can a case be quoted in which reasoning was not followed by urgent exhortation? It would be profitable to gather into one view the "wherefores" of Paul's epistle.

Notice the tender terms in which the Philippians are addressed: "my beloved." Only those who love us and who are loved by us can receive our doctrine and reduce it to practice. Men are not always convinced by logic; there must be something in them which responds to the logic, otherwise the reasoning is but a process of legerdemain which has no bearing upon character and progress. Notice also the eulogium which is passed upon the Philippians: "as ye have always obeyed." It is to obedience that ever brightening vision is granted. Reputation for obedience is the supreme fame in the kingdom of God. "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me"; then comes the promise of divine manifestation to the obedient heart.

Has the Apostle merely enriched the Philippians with theological learning and wisdom? The

answer is in this verse: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." All increase of wisdom should end in increase of "work." And all sincere "work" tends to the confirmation of the truth which has been revealed and perceived. Turn your theology into industry if you would verify the doctrine and assure yourself of further and deeper tuition. To "work out" means to carry to maturity of perfection, to fulfil the divine purpose in the life. All work falls within the term obedience. Every man has to "work" as if everything depended upon him; then he has to wait as if everything depended upon God. The whole process here described is a process of co-operation. Man works towards God, because God works in man. Jesus Christ assured the healed sufferer that her faith had made her whole; faith in Christ co-operates with the spirit of love that is in Christ, and brings it into application to daily pain and need.

"It is God which worketh in you." The apostolic doctrine is that there is nothing good in man. The bad worker can never do good work. We do not hesitate to say that the devil works in many hearts and proves his ministry by daily increase of wickedness and pestilent influence; why should we hesitate to say that God works in the good and thus daily increases the clear-

ness of his own revelation to the world as the Holy One ?

Never limit the great word "salvation." It involves all the springs, motives, aspirations, services of men. We are saved from ignorance, error, narrowness, pettiness, sordidness, worldliness, as well as from what is known by the larger and blacker term sin.

When Paul says that God works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure, he means that God works graciously, with a view to our sanctification and the acquisition of all its consequent blessings. This spiritual working is an action in which God himself may be said to find joy. He is as a husbandman who finds the reward of gladness in the fruitfulness of the olive or the vine or the wheat-field. He is as a builder who rejoices to watch the completion of the edifice which he has planned. Whatever God may do in the human soul as disciplinarian, he certainly works with divine delight when he carries on the mystery of sanctification in the human soul. God is holy, and he delights in holiness.

Verses 14, 15. "Do all things without murmurings and disputings : That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world."

The Apostle here descends to

a lower level, partly a level of negative goodness, the goodness of abstention, the goodness of personal and social contrast. The Christian is continually under the temptation to attend to verbal quibbles, murmurings, and disputings. He is tempted to dispute the will which leaves him a divine inheritance. He has also to confront the vexatious and pitiable questionings of unbelief. His very obedience is criticised by outside observers. On further examination the exhortation is positive as well as negative. Only the very soul of meekness can do all things without murmurings and disputings. We cannot conduct this process of life in a merely mechanical way. It is a spirit before it is an action. Only in the degree in which we have the spirit of Christ can we fulfil the law of Christ.

This exhortation is also associated with the significant eulogium, "among whom ye shine as lights in the world,"—as luminaries, as lamps, as living candles, as beacons and examples. It is well to have our position as Christians clearly defined. That position is never one of darkness or incertitude or spiritual hesitancy. Jesus Christ has made his Church the light of the world. Think of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ as so many lighted torches, kindled at the very fount of glory, and you have a picture of the illumin-

ation with which Christians should flood the whole world.

Verse 16. "Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain."

The "word of life" is the everlasting Gospel. By the Gospel alone life enters the soul. The Gospel is both written and personified. It is personified in Jesus Christ: it is written in Holy Scripture. Jesus Christ was the "word of God," and he also spoke the word of God, "and this is the word which by our Gospel is preached unto you."

Here, again, we have the plea of personal affection urged upon the Christian Philippians: "that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain." Sometimes we are moved by the highest motives, and sometimes by motives not of the sublimest order, yet of an order peculiarly natural and tender. Shall we not give joy to a man who has laboured so self-sacrificingly in our interests? Should we not endeavour to please the Apostle to whom, under the blessing of God, we owe the Gospel which has filled us with light and gladness? In this very appeal the Apostle makes known the strenuousness of his evangelistic efforts,—“run” and “laboured”: Gospel preaching was no easy recreation to the Apostle;

he always connects it with running, striving, discipline, stress, hardness. Is it to be wondered at that a man who has spent himself so unreservedly should desire to come before the King with trophies and results, which will make him glad under the criticism of the Master?

Verses 19-30. This passage, so full of personal affection, and so practical in its criticism and exhortation, may be reduced into some such paraphrase as this:

All things are at present uncertain; but in the midst of the uncertainty I have a secret and inspiring hope. I dare hardly tell you what that hope is; but it begins by exciting the happy thought that I may be able to send Timotheus to you almost at once; he will tell me the exact state of affairs at Philippi, and I have no doubt his report will give me further and stronger courage. I have absolute confidence in Timotheus; in fact, I do not know any man equal to him in soul; there is no selfishness in my young friend; in all things he will be animated by a true concern for your spiritual welfare. I could send many other people, but I have not confidence in their unselfishness; they would turn the mission to their own account; they think more of

themselves than of the Saviour whose name they profess; they have their good qualities, but they have not yet risen above the level of self-appreciation and self-promotion. The whole idea and conception of things is different in the case of Timotheus. He is not so much a colleague as a child of mine; he does all things in quite a filial way; he knows my purpose, and in all things he seeks to fulfil it. Receive him with great gladness and with the uttermost confidence. I will send him as soon as I shall see clearly how things are going. My secret hope extends even beyond the mission of Timotheus; indeed, I may tell you that I have a strong persuasion, and I believe it is the Lord's will, that I also myself shall come almost at once. And yet, as we can never tell how things may be shaped (though we know that all things are in the divine hand), I think it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, a strong man, capable of handling things in quite a wise and efficient manner. I have conferred many degrees upon Epaphroditus—"my brother," "my fellow worker," "my fellow soldier," and a "minister to my need." He will come

with rich experience, for he has been in great affliction and sorrow, even very nigh unto death. His restoration was quite a miracle of the divine mercy; and, indeed, not only had God mercy upon Epaphroditus, but he took compassion upon me also, that I might not have one billow of sorrow after another overwhelming me before I had time to take my breath. I am quite eager about sending Epaphroditus, because I want to make you glad again, and I want myself to receive some mitigation of my personal sorrow. You will know how to receive such men; give them to feel that they are cordially welcome; hold them in high honour; their names are written in heaven; for the work of Christ they have been drawn nigh even unto death. Epaphroditus even went so far as to put his life in jeopardy that he might complete the transaction between you and me. What you could not do he did. Consider it a high honour to minister to men who have proved themselves sincere and efficient ministers of grace (1 Cor. xvi. 16).

Paul not only taught courtesy, he exemplified it. He was the very pattern and the very spirit of Christian civility. A beautiful

illustration is found in his reference to Phebe, who was about to visit the Church at Rome: "Receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints" (Rom. xvi. 2). He who would have all men honoured was naturally anxious that apostles and ministers should receive special recognition. In the word honour we have implied value; and in the word value we have implied honour. See how eager Paul is to pass just judgment upon the men who were round about him. It was not an indiscriminate judgment. Paul did not praise all men under the cover of a general compliment: he distinguished between sincerity and hypocrisy; he magnified the difference between consecration and pretence. Singularly beautiful is the eulogium passed upon Epaphroditus. He compares him to a man who had been playing a game of hazard, his own life being the stake. For Paul's sake he had been venturesome almost to recklessness. This personal devotion to Paul throws a sidelight upon Paul's own character. What enthusiasm he could inspire! How men were fascinated by his spiritual magnetism. He declares that some of his converts would have given him their eyes if they could. Paul is not afraid to speak of men who had played the coward or the miser. He once refused to have for a travelling companion

a man who had proved faulty in personal courage. He handed some men over to Satan that they might learn not to blaspheme. When a man can make such broad and vital distinctions, his compliments or eulogies acquire peculiar value.

CHAPTER III.

Verse 1. "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe."

The Apostle thinks he is now drawing his letter to a close. This epistle, like many modern sermons, does not conclude immediately after the word "finally." There is always a larger vision beyond, or a need for further warning and encouragement. Some new communication may have been made to the Apostle, or some divine hint may have aroused his caution and led to this exhortation. The Apostle is anxious for the safety of the Philippian Christians. He knows that repetition may be tedious, but he is aware that tediousness should be endured rather than safety should be imperilled. He now proceeds to give specific warnings and directions.

Verses 2, 3. "Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and

rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

The Apostle describes the Judaising party as "dogs." Dogs that bark and snap and bite may be taken as fair illustrations of the spirit of narrowness and bigotry which never can admit a new view or gratefully recognise a new personality. Sectarians of the unintelligent sort should be reminded that so great a man as the Apostle Paul likened them to snarling dogs that bark at supposed strangers and invaders.

The Apostle warns the Philippians against evil workers, bad workmen, jerry-builders, men who work deceitfully and without heed to the balances of justice. Evil workers cannot do other than evil works; they must be true to their own base quality. A bad man cannot paint a good picture or build a good house: in some rough and mechanical sense this may not be so, but in the spiritual interpretation of things it will be found that the very house, though it be a temple of worship, is affected by the character of the men who built it.

The Apostle next warns the Philippians against the concision, —the mangers, the mutilators, the men who bring things into a state of havoc and confusion. Beware of little men, small, nagging, verbal, pedantic critics. Avoid those who have no broad

and generous conceptions of the kingdom of heaven.

To the concision Paul opposes the circumcision,—something more historical, more complete, more in the sequence of divine evolution. The true circumcision is of the heart. The reference here is not to some merely physical rite; it is to the circumcision of the inner man, the rectification of the conscience, the will, and the affections.

The Apostle insists upon spiritual worship. Worship means service. Paul is claiming to be associated with a worship which is created and inspired by the spirit of God. This spiritual worship leads him to glory in Christ Jesus. To glory, rather than rejoice, is the meaning of his expression: "I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ" (Rom. xv. 17). Christianity is not to be a merely intellectual profession; men are to glory in their Saviour, to glory in their faith, to glory in their prospects. To glory in Christ is more than to believe in Christ, as summer is more than spring. Paul had quite escaped all confidence in the flesh. He had, so to say, been incarnated, and rejoiced in having thrown the flesh behind and gone forward with song and exultation into the ministry of the spirit.

Verses 4, 5. "Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any

other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee."

This is the Apostle's outward life, which he has intelligently and voluntarily discarded in favour of a larger consciousness and experience. The statement may be thus paraphrased:

I am a Jew born, not a pagan converted. My circumcision was not that of a proselyte, for I was circumcised the eighth day. There is no flaw in my pedigree, which goes back to the very father of the patriarchs. I could not only boast of being a native Jew, but I can give you the name of the tribe from which I have descended. I am of the tribe of the first king, the tribe of Benjamin; read the history of that tribe and you will find that Benjamin only was faithful in the supreme crisis of the history of Judah. Through and through I am Hebrew, not a Hellenist—indeed, I have no connection with the Hellenists: every drop of my blood is Hebrew, and of the first Hebrew quality. If you raise any question of law, I claim to be, as to the law, a Pharisee; I know the law of Moses word by word. I

believe in law, whether Jewish or Roman or cosmopolitan. I am not a libertine. I do not live by license, but by law. I was technically scrupulous in all my obedience to the law. I am a Pharisee, and the son of Pharisees for generations. Nor have I ever been faithless to my pedigree: after the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee. I was a fierce antagonist of the whole Christian idea (1 Cor. xv. 9, Gal. i. 23). That was my former, my historical case; take the case as it now stands:

Verses 7-11. "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."

The two statements are strongly contrastive. The second statement may be thus paraphrased:

Do not suppose that it is an easy thing for a man to

cut up the roots of his personal history, or to renounce the privileges and enjoyments of his former life. But by the grace of God I have done this. I have numbered my gains one by one, and I have voluntarily cast them from me, counting them but loss in view of my greater gains in Christ Jesus. Before the excellent knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord all other knowledge is ignorance and vanity. For Christ's sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse that I might win Christ. I have but one only ambition, and that is, to be found in Christ, not having a righteousness either hereditary or mechanical, the kind of righteousness which the law can give, but another righteousness, which comes through faith in Christ: this righteousness you cannot understand by the mere intellect; you must have rich experience of it, and obey it as the supreme force of the soul. I want to know Jesus Christ in all the sufferings of his priesthood; I want to share the power of his resurrection, and to enjoy partnership in his suffering. I want to be gradually conformed to his death, made of one form with his death; I

want to be buried with him; I want to be identified with Christ, if by any means I might arrive at the resurrection from the dead. That is the goal at which I am aiming.

Verse 12. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus."

Here the Apostle defines his position with all personal humility. He makes no claim to perfection. He is one who is pressing on towards a high end. He wants to lay hold upon (apprehend) the living Christ. He would apprehend as he also himself was apprehended by Jesus Christ at the gate of Damascus. As Christ seized or arrested him, so he would seize or arrest Christ. He had a definite business in life, and no man should turn him away from its ardent pursuit. Paul constantly saw the prize and constantly determined, by the grace of God, to secure it.

Verses 15, 16. "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing."

We are not perfect, but we are struggling after perfection. We

want to realise an ideal. We are not mature, we are yet in a state of infancy; yet in that we are growing towards maturity, we already rejoice in the first consciousness of manhood. We keep patiently walking by the same rule and in the same order, for it is along the line which God himself has defined that we shall discover and enjoy the whole idea of the Christian salvation. God will save us even from the results of unintentional error. Some Christians may be "otherwise minded," but in the proportion in which they are sincere and humble God will complete in them the revelation of his mystery. Paul uses the word "reveal,"—take away the veil and show things as they really are.

Verses 17-21. "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.) For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

The Apostle sees the worst aspect of the Christian life when he fixes his attention upon those

who have walked unworthily, men who, notwithstanding a great profession, are the enemies of the Cross of Christ. They are men who are still in the flesh. They are only strong in their baser nature; men who are so over-fed that they glory in their shame. In opposition to these men the true Christians have their citizenship in heaven, and from the heavens is their whole expectation. Christians have always been expecting the return of the Lord Jesus. How he will return no man can tell. There can be no doubt, however, as to the actual returning, whenever and wherever it may take place. By a large accession of faith, by an increase of fervent love, by a consciousness of unutterable joy, by a desire to make the Gospel universally known, we shall know that Jesus Christ has in very deed returned to his Church. Jesus will transfigure the very fashion of the body of our abasement. Christ shall be known by the shining of our faces. His disciples shall be clothed, as it were, in light, and their glory shall be seen from afar. This not as the result of any organised efforts of their own, but as the expression of the working of his power,—that wondrous power, by which he is able to bring all things under his gracious dominion. As we grow in grace Christ returns to the soul. We may know that his return is near

the point of completion because we love him with intenser ardour and serve him with more constant faithfulness.

CHAPTER IV.

Verse 1. "Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved."

The Apostle's heart is in a state of exultant affectionateness, and it is always interesting to watch the Apostle Paul under such conditions. He is as a man counting his jewels and gems, and, as it were, making a reckoning of his wealth. The Philippians are his "joy and crown." Writing to the Thessalonians, he asks, "What is our hope and joy, and crown of rejoicing?" Then he adds, "Ye are our glory and joy." The New Testament writers greatly appreciated this figure of the crown, the crown of glory; the crown of righteousness; the crown of life. Paul said there was a crown laid up for him, as it were, a possession to be obtained and secured only after death; but in the case of the Philippians the crown was already on his head, he rejoiced in the glorious coronation. Sometimes the future is so vividly realised as to become the present, and sometimes the present is so enlarged and glorified as to acquire a touch of heavenliness. Out of

this ecstasy Paul as usual descends to practical exhortation: "so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved." Heaven was not yet attained. The full coronation could not take place until the Philippians had proved their steadfastness to the utmost point. "He that endureth unto the end shall be saved." The Apostle still utilises the military figure of standing.

Verse 2. "I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord."

What an excellent stroke of policy to "beseech" both the parties who were in conflict! Notice the master-builder. If he had said, "I beseech Euodias to make friends with Syntyche," he would have adopted a side, and would have incurred the suspicion of prejudice. Paul treats both even-handedly; the one could not say he preferred the other. Euodias and Syntyche were women leaders at Philippi. With regard to the womanly element, Philippi had a unique history. At Philippi the Gospel was first preached to women, and, according to Acts xvi. 14, 40, the Church was first formed in the house of a woman. When Paul entreats he does not fall into an attitude of prostration, he simply makes a suggestion or prefers a request. Paul will insist upon the necessity of unity and real brotherhood if the Church is

to realise and enjoy the presence of the Spirit. Concession must be the policy of all whose hearts have been momentarily estranged. The great question should always be, "Which of us can realise the highest degree of Christian forbearance and forgiveness?" Where this spirit rules, hostilities or misunderstandings will soon be brought to a close.

Verse 3. "And I entreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the Gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life."

The "yokefellow" has not been identified. It is thought that Epaphroditus may be meant. Paul wishes a third party to intervene, not with a view to taking sides, but distinctly with a view to the reconciliation of those who were in conflict. The Apostle desires that his "true yokefellow" would "help" the estranged women. The word "help" is very significant. It may represent one who lays hold of a weight or burden with a view to assist another to carry the load. The word is used in Luke v. 7: "They beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them." This is the only part which interveners should take in social strife. In all controversies see the point at which reconciliation is most likely to take effect.

The Apostle gratefully recognises the part which the two women had taken in his missionary efforts. They had fought side by side with him; they had shared his contest. It is singular that though the Apostle represents himself as an athlete, he yet confesses that his athletic exercises had been helped by two sisters in the Lord. The weakest can help the strongest.

A beautiful reference is that which the Apostle makes to "the book of life" (see Dan. xii. 1, Rev. iii. 5, Rev. xiii. 8). Jesus called upon his apostles to rejoice that their names were written in the book of life. The idea is that of a list or register of persons and hearts sealed unto everlasting life, but perhaps for the present kept as a secret hereafter to be revealed (read Gen. v. 1, Ex. xxxii. 33). In Psalm lxix. 28 the Psalmist uses a strong expression: "Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous." Strong expressions may also be found in Isaiah iv. 3, Ezekiel xiii. 9, Revelation xiii. 8.

Verses 4, 5. "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand."

The Apostle calls once more with the trumpet of joy. He will not allow the Philippian heart to be depressed. Some souls are given to seeing the dark side of

things, and this may have been the case with the Christians at Philippi. Paul is an optimist; he will not have life beclouded with fear and sadness. He insists upon it that there is no need for such depression, so again and again he cries out, "Rejoice, rejoice!" When the Lord is nigh there should be no giving way to sadness. The Lord is always nigh—in his Spirit, in his promises, in the ministry of his grace. He is separated from us by the merest film. He touches us, though we are not conscious of the pressure of his hand. He sees us, though we cannot see him. This consolation remains to the Christian in all the vicissitudes of his experience. Only be sure that the Lord is nigh, and we shall walk in noontide light whatever our bodily environment may be.

Verses 6, 7. "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

This is the Christian policy—nay, rather, this is the Christian triumph. The Christian is to live in prayer, and all his requests will be answered if remitted to the will of God. Simply tell God all that is in your heart, empty your soul before God, let your ignorance speak as well as your

knowledge, let your very self-consideration put in its feeble plea, and then leave the whole case to God. Then shall come the great answer. All your supplications may [be cast out as void and worthless, but the peace of God which passeth all understanding, the peace of God which transcends all intellectual processes shall take charge of you—shall guard you as if you were in a fortress, and the holy sentinel were watching its impregnable walls. The peace of God is to garrison the heart; the peace of God is to garrison the very thoughts of the heart, not the mind only as an organ of intelligence, but all the thoughts of the mind, all the operations of the soul. Within Christ Jesus believers live as in a fortress. Do not wander on the outside of things, exposing yourselves to all the possibilities of surprise and danger, seen and unseen, but live within the rocky fortress of the infinite protection of Christ. We are not to take care of ourselves; we are to be taken care of by Christ, who is the fortress of his people.

Verse 8. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

This is the Christian creed, and this is the Christian policy. These things go infinitely further back than their etymological derivations. The "honest" is the venerable, so is the "true." These elements or qualities go back to God. If we were true and honest we should be in our degree God-like. Whatever is just is of the nature of divine righteousness. "Pure" may be an abstract term, quite metaphysical indeed, but it is to express itself in justice as between man and man. "Lovely" is that which is beautiful in itself, and that as such deserves to be loved. Lovable would express the idea in part. "Things that are of good report" are things that create their own reputation, bringing a flavour of sweetness and agreeableness by their very nature. "Virtue" and "praise" belong to one another. "Virtue" is that which is inherent, and "praise" is that which is due to virtue because of its strength and nobleness. Christians are called to virtue, to manliness, to strength, to moral majesty.

Verses 9, 10. "Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you. But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.

The Apostle thus puts himself

in a somewhat episcopal relation to the Philippian believers. He is their exemplar. His authority is tested by the excellence of the counsel which he gives. He does not give the counsel because he is in authority, but he acquires the authority by giving the counsel. Though he sustained this dignified relation to the Philippians, he acknowledged his obligation to them for many a gracious benefit. Notice in this case that it is not "the peace of God" only, but "the God of peace." This is really the end of the letter, the rest being of the nature of a post-script. It seems, indeed, as if the Apostle could not conclude his letter to this beloved community. When did love ever speak its last word? How many times do friends say "good-bye" when they are loath to part? It is the way of love; it is the very genius of earnestness and sympathy. We say good-bye; then we add a few words and say "good-bye" again; suddenly something new occurs to the mind, and we detain our friend until we have expressed it, and then once more we say "good-bye"; and even yet again; for who cares to say the last word or take the last look when friends who love one another are about to part?

Verse 11. "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."

Upon this verse see a special sermon at the end of this exposition. The word "content" really means self-sufficing as between man and man, because God is the sufficiency of the soul on its divine side. He whose sufficiency is in God and of God is self-sufficing as to man. The Apostle represents himself as having penetrated the very heart of a gracious mystery. He has learned the secret of divine living. If for a moment we are tempted to think that the Apostle glories almost excessively even in this carefully guarded self-sufficiency, he instantly puts himself in a relation to Christ which shows that his sufficiency was no personal or superficial boast. In verse 13 he says, "I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me." In his concluding words, from verse 14 onward, he comforts the Philippians by assuring them that not one favour which they had bestowed upon him was lost. Though he could do without them, he could do better with them. He does not for a moment overlook the supremacy and the uniqueness of their concern for him, for he says that when he departed from Macedonia no Church communicated with him as concerning giving and receiving, but the Philippians only. He does not forget that in Thessalonica the Philippians had ministered once and again unto his neces-

sity. The Philippians watched his course, wondered how his resources were holding out, anticipated his possible wants, and graciously communicated accordingly. He did not suffer want; he had everything to the full, and even more than to the full; he seemed to abound and superabound, so as to have need of nothing, because his sufficiency was of God. All he required was fruit that might abound to the account of his friends. From them he had received an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God. And how were the Philippians themselves to fare, seeing that they abounded in grace and service towards the Apostle? The Apostle returns a thrilling reply to this inquiry: "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (ver. 19). He connected them with the fountain. They were no longer dependent upon superficial pools which evaporate in the heat of the sun; they were connected with the well-head and spring of life and benediction.

Beautiful are the words of salutation: "Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you. All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Cæsar's household." But all this would be nothing, and less than nothing, but for the final benediction. "The grace of our

Lord Jesus Christ be with you all"—with your spirit—part of your very soul—enter into the very tissue and substance of your being. As we live and move and have our being in God, so our	souls are to revel and flourish in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. We live by favour. We feed on corn which we did not grow. We have bread to eat that the world knoweth not of.
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CONTENTMENT.

"I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."

—PHIL. iv. 11.

THROUGHOUT this epistle there is a heightening tone of filial thankfulness and saintly triumph. Its first word is one of thankfulness, its last of benediction. The apostle gladly announces that the most contrary events have "fallen out unto the furtherance of the Gospel,"—his very bonds had caused many of the brethren to "wax confident." He says, "I joy and rejoice with you all"; he calls the Church his "joy and crown"; and in a moment of high exultation and overbrimming gladness he exclaims, "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Once again he says, "Rejoice in the Lord." Joy is the keynote of this melodious letter. Why should this be accounted a remarkable circumstance? Might not joy sing in an apostle's heart as well as in the heart of garlanded conquerors

and throned kings? The remarkable fact is this, that the man who thus rejoices and summons other persons to kindred gladness is a *prisoner*! In his external condition there is nothing calling for joy of heart. The criminal's chain is on the author's hand, and even on that symbol of degradation he has no curse to pronounce. So happy a man never was bound to the throne of Nero. The chain binds him rather to the Cross of Jesus than to the dungeon of the emperor. You expected the moan of angry discontent from the wronged bondsman, and lo, a happy song is on his lip! You expected to see a man bowed down with grief, and lo, a plumed head is lifted up in the sunshine! You thought his letter would have been deep bordered with the blackness of mourning, and behold, it is fringed as with refined silver!

This problem must be solved. The man is mad, or the discontented world is mad. The secret must be examined and pronounced upon. When men are borne up in such ecstatic experiences, when

their strong, free wing nears the sun, they necessarily express themselves in language dimly intelligible to men who are grovelling in the dust. Their glowing words are deemed poetic rather than practical; they are lethargically pronounced rhapsodical and extravagant; there is an unearthliness in their victor-tones; and men who never climbed a tree wonder how others can scale the stars.

What a banner is this that the Apostle floats from his Roman prison! Did ever human madness conceive so strange a device as that which it bears? While men are on every hand complaining and repining, one voice is lifted up higher than all others, and its sweet word is, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." There is an air of impossibility about the utterance. The speaker is in such a marked minority that we would gladly, in self-defence, charge him with insanity. We feel this all the more that the voice comes from the prison and not from the palace. It is not the imperial voice of Cæsar, but the voice of Cæsar's prisoner. The Festus-world is indignant, and cannot withhold the exclamation, "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad." Yes; "beside thyself": the world is in deep debt to its madmen. These madmen keep the chariot-wheel in

motion; they climb heights and fathom depths which strike terror into the coward-heart of their contemporaries. A man cannot attain any sublime moral experience without incurring the charge of madness. Christ was plainly told that he had a devil; and the men who told him this would not scruple to call Jehovah Beelzebub. It is difficult to interpret men who are upon a higher plane than ourselves; and, failing to interpret them, it is easy to roar up into the higher spheres a vague charge of madness. The madness of one age is the sobriety of the next. We must allow for a little foam; when the sea has lost its foam it may still be majestic, but I shall deem that its pulse has ceased and its eternal hymn been hushed in death.

"I have learned." Special emphasis and fervour must be thrown into this word "learned," for it is one of the keywords of the passage; it is a multitudinous word. It speaks of a school and of education, of drilling and many-sided discipline. The whole utterance is that of a man who has been undergoing a process, who has been immured in a library, and who, having patiently read page after page, and undergone a severe and exhaustive examination, pronounces himself "learned." If we stumble at the word "learned" we shall stumble all through the exposition. A man cannot come to

this moral eminence by intuition : it is not to be attained in a moment of high inspiration of genius ; nothing but the ripping plough, dragged by a fire-breathing team, and the pulverising harrow, and the crushing roller : nothing but a discipline that grinds the bones, and racks the heart, and strains the very last suggestion out of the over-goaded brain : nothing but the hardships of earth, sanctified by the Spirit of heaven, can make the "learned" man of the text. Not books, but heavy burdens,—not gifts of the intellect, but griefs of the heart,—not paid school-masters, but invisible, despotic, inexorable tutors, can carry us through the education which ends in this lofty refinement of learning.

The Apostle's autobiography is at hand, and that will tell us somewhat of the educational course through which he passed :

"In much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report : as deceivers, and yet true ; as unknown, and yet well known ; as dying, and behold we live ; as chastened, and not killed ; as sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing ; as poor, yet making many rich ; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

What think you of that ? A man striking and swiftly recoiling, —hardly in one condition until he

is thrown into another ; just rising into honour, and suddenly plunged into dishonour ; on the point of imagining himself well known, and in a moment the world shuddering with horror at the mention of his name ! This rapidly alternating experience gives a man profound lore. It is not the gradual transition by which day darkens into night, and night brightens into day. If an analogy can be found in the firmament, it must be when storms are raging there, and light breaking through the gloomy masses : now is there a wing of deep blue, and anon the clouds shut it out from the eye of the admiring earth : this moment there is a fringe of beauty on the dark storm-cloud ; and the next, thunder roars as if cursing the intrusion. We must not only have variety, but also suddenness and violence of alternation. Our bread must be snatched out of our hand at the very moment that our hunger pines for it, and the water dashed from our grasp when the fire is scorching our tongue. A discipline of this kind will teach us much of inconstancy and mutation, much of the fickleness of circumstance, much of the rottenness of man.

Another page of the Apostle's autobiography contains this :

"Are they ministers of Christ ? (I speak as a fool.) I am more ; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in

deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes, save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods; once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness."

No wonder that the Apostle, having passed through this rugged university, should emerge a man of profound and varied learning. He has seen life on every side. Books can do comparatively little in the education of the whole breadth of our manhood. They are useful up to a given point. They cannot be dispensed with in any course of liberal education. The world must always have its library. Authorship is a profession that never can decline. The pen shall flourish when the rust of ages has eaten up the barbarous sword. While this is happily true, it must be borne in mind that books can never give the learning which the Apostle here claims for himself. Stoning and shipwreck and scourging and misrepresentation and desertion; hunger and thirst and nakedness; fire and pestilence and sword;—these must be the fierce teachers and savage drill-

sergeants to whose discipline the heart must submit. He is but a learned fool who has read nothing but books. Such a reader can never pronounce with authority on any of the deeper problems of human life.

I rejoice that the Apostle has written this catalogue of his sufferings. Do you ask me why? Because it does the breaking heart good to hear the sob of another's greater woe! The Bible could not have been God's book had it been unmarked by the traces of manifold grief. I could not have read a Bible all sunshine. We need more than summer in any book that is to meet all the features and experiences of this apostate life. God has graciously permitted his servants to put on record the story of their struggles in the service of Jesus. Not only so; he has done more; he has actually inspired the pen that gave these harrowing delineations of suffering! In such a circumstance there must be a deep moral. Why keep up the memory of suffering? Why not permit the recollection to fade away? Why throw the weeds of desolation around life's milestones? Why invest the shoulders of history with the scarf of the mourner? We thought that God would have carefully obliterated the footsteps of the destroyer; that he would have followed closely the march

of history, and left nothing but the flowers of beauty and the sparks of glory! Instead of this, his own book is a record of human endurance even in his own service. This must be that other men who have yet to travel life's weary way may be assisted in the accumulation of "learning." Grief has been left sitting in the dark, damp valleys of history, that it might comfort grief. Sorrow pities sorrow. There is healing in the gentle touch of a wounded heart. Joy cannot talk to grief,—they would be ill-met interlocutors. Joy's sharp, ringing, chiming laugh would grate harshly on the stunned ear of grief. You can never laugh a man out of his woes. See Jesus when he comes to speak to the bereaved sisters. Though his words are concerning the joyous subject of resurrection, yet they are jewelled with the tears of his tender pity. Tears understand tears. Hearts long sundered are brought into saintly fellowship by the mastery of a common woe. I cannot, then, have any hesitation in claiming all this explanation of how the Apostle became "learned" as a proof of the adaptation of Holy Scripture to meet all the exigences of an ever-changing experience. It was merciful on the part of God to treasure up for coming ages the memorials of human suffering; and we should thank him not only for preserving for

us the light of the sun, but for preserving also the darkened chambers in which anguish has poured out her boiling tears!

This "learning" is not to be attained in a day; nor can it be attained prospectively; it must come little by little, and must come from the iron lips of fact, rather than from the honied tongue of theory. When God sends the need he sends the strength too; and herein is that saying true, "As thy day, so shall thy strength be." The world's burden-bearers have ever said this; said it under scorching suns; said it under chilling skies; and if there has been a troubled moment of hesitation, it has been succeeded by a lifetime of childlike acquiescence.

The Apostle, then, became a "learned" man through long endured hardship; and we must have time as one condition of attaining the same reach and tone of experience. It is hard for the young heart in its first paroxysm of grief to say, "I am content." I cannot believe, and therefore will not teach, that God requires it immediately to pronounce such deep and solemn words. God is the most patient of teachers, and as such he will not call for the lesson the moment he has given the book. Do you think that while the deep gash is still bleeding, a young heart whose summer visions have been quenched in utter darkness can say, with venerable

apostles, "I am content"? Is a man to be branded as an infidel because he cannot sing songs of joy in the presence of the disaster which has made life a ruin? Go into that sick-chamber; shut yourself up there, and serve and wait until the darkness and the light become both alike to you. Serve through the cheerless day,—serve through the tedious night: touch every duty with the untiring hand of love: steal softly from place to place, lest a footfall should agitate the sufferer. Go on so for days and weeks; mark how all your suggestions prove useless, and how all your efforts fail. Gladly would you be cut up limb by limb if you could save the sick one. Bitterly you weep, and in anguish which devils might pity you say:

"When such friends part,
'Tis the survivor dies."

Long do you persist in hoping. When your heart is bursting you try to smile on the sufferer, as though there were no cause for alarm. When your bones smite one another in sore distress, and you stiffen in the cold of a great agony, you try to utter some tone of joy, but the lying word dies on the coward lip. Tell me how you feel when the terrible truth bursts upon you that the eyes which have watched you with infinite interest for many a year can recognise you no longer, that upon them is

settling the dim mist of too early death: when you realise that the heart which ever throbbed faithfully to your own is about to yield to the tyranny of Death; that the voice which was your sweetest and holiest music will no longer break silence and charm you into the intercourse of love. Man! I ask thee, in the hearing of God, whether thou canst then say, "I am content"? Is not the hard-run heart overborne in that dread crisis? Can the swelling brain keep an unwavering balance? Would you not gladly rush through the nearest gate into eternity, and hail the emancipated one in the language of the better world? God is not angry with your hot tears. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth you in that saddest and dreariest hour. He says, "Be patient with the child: the storm has assailed him at the roots: give him liberty to weep himself into a moment's rest." Thus God is gentle to us. He waits; he watches; he yearns; he gives us time to put off our shoes and to gather firmness while he communes with us from the flaming bush.

It is a hollow and vulgar religion—learned anywhere except at Bethlehem, Gethsemane, or Golgotha—that urges a man to say in his first agony, "I am content." Do you know what it is to have only one ewe lamb, and to have it plundered from your gentle

keeping? Do you know what it is to have one tree only in whose shade you could ever find rest, and to hear the ringing blows of the axe, sharp and heavy, without having any power to arrest the arm that wields the fatal weapon? I tell you, with God's book open before me, that God will not be angry with your shiver of distress; will not pour contempt on the tears of your surging sorrow. God is tender: God is pitiful: God is sympathetic; and he will give power to the faint. I cannot believe that dry eyes are the highest test of heroism. Indifference is no attribute of Christian manhood. No tear is expected to start into the stony eye of the statue, but the eye of life beams the more brightly for the stream of sorrow that rushes through it. The man of deep grief is not to be charged with repining and discontent. The contentment of which the Apostle speaks is, happily, compatible with the fullest expression of nature's trouble; so that the man bowed down by the tempest—riven and dismantled by the angry storm—may feel in his hottest agony a wish to be resigned to the highest will. This is acceptable with God. He knoweth our thought afar off. He marks the disposition long before it creates the act, and upon that he pours the light of his approbation.

Here is a lovely young creature, of lofty judgment, and pure heart,

and hand undefiled. She is unobtrusive as a violet, constant as a star. Never did offensive word escape her well watched lips; never was her name associated with ungente deed. Over her shines the summer sky; around her beam ten thousand mercies; the sun never sets on her heritage; the lines run through pleasant places. The poor pronounce her name with veneration, and the suffering listen eagerly for her words of sympathy. All the while, however, a cruel disease is insidiously striking its deadly roots; an enemy has fixed his un pitying eye on the young, fresh, noble heart; and his unchangeable purpose is to put the fatal shaft right through it. Go and tell the doomed one that the writing of death is already sealed. Tell her that henceforward pain will be her daily portion—that every meal she eats is but an empty mockery of self-preservation—that the purest water is poured into secret fountains of poison—that the very breezes of summer are only making her more beautiful for death. I ask if, under such circumstances, you can expect the fated one to answer in a moment, "I am content"? No! She must have time for consideration; she must recover herself from the dizziness of so awful a bewilderment; she must put out her trembling hands for the rod and the staff, and after that she may endeavour, with

quivering lip, to say, "I will fear no evil." The young heart cannot reconcile itself to dying, all at once. The grimmest of all grim monsters cannot be called beautiful at first sight. There is no charm in his hollow eye or sunken cheek. Young life shudders at the monster's hideous revelation; and even heaven itself looks less than heaven when it must be reached by the overthrow of so tremendous an enemy! One of the last of our loved ones who took wing from earth's winter to heaven's summer said, as she looked on the deep, wide, black river which men call death, "I have no doubt of going to heaven, but oh, the crossing, the crossing!" Ah! how that dreaded "crossing" made the heart cringe and shiver! Yet, when that dear, timid traveller came down to the cold river's edge, reft of every plea but the plea that Jesus died, the God of the floods parted the waves before her feet, and she passed through as on dry ground! Thus is God ever better than our fears. He sends angels before us to prepare the way. Carefully, with hands of gentlest love, are the impediments removed. In our unfaith we look onward to some awful calamity, and lo! God puts on it a wreath of beauty, and we begin to pray where we expected to die!

We may now pass from the

word "learned" to the word "content." The one refers to a process; the other to a result. The solution of the difficulty may, in my opinion, be condensed into a single sentence—the Apostle was "content" with every state as educational, not final. The whole mystery of the word is to be explained, I submit, by some such expression as educational, not final—preliminary, not ultimate. No man could be content with suffering as a permanent condition of being; but the Christian reaches that high moral estate in which he can not only accept, but even cherish it as a purifying and perfecting discipline. He is "content" with it as a preparation for something better; he is "content" with the plough, because it is preparing the very heart which it crushes to receive the seed which shall bloom in immortal beauty and fruitfulness. An illustration will bring the idea within the capacity of a child. You are building a mansion; you are engaged in a work which must be prosecuted little by little; you begin by digging deep foundations, and when the earth is opened like a gigantic tomb, I ask, "Are you 'content' with this?" You answer, "Yes, as part of the process"; then you pile the roughest of the work as a great enduring basis, and I ask, "Are you 'content' with these immense, unpolished, and ungainly looking

stones?" You answer, "Yes, as part of the process." You are "content" because each stage is essential to the completion, and your contentment arises from the progress and the prophecy rather than from each particular state of the work. Day by day you proceed, through shine and storm, "content" with everything that is done, because it is tending to the realisation of your ideal. Were the work to be abandoned when it is only half done, you could not be "content" with it; but you are content with even the half when you know that the other half is to be perfected. Thus our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look, not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. Observe the words which are to receive the explaining emphasis. We bring "the power of an endless life" to bear upon the transient scenes of earth, and that "power" turns our heaviest woes into "afflictions which are but for a moment," and thus we are more than "content," and we "glory in tribulations also." The same idea may receive illustration from the case of a man who is engaged in the study of a language. He knows the price which he must pay, and has resolved to pay it. He sits down to the alphabet—the shell which contains the

kernels of richest genius and attainment—and having mastered that, he is "content." In what sense is he "content"? He cannot read Homer, or Virgil, or Dante; how, then, can he be "content"? The answer is, he is "content" with his acquisition as educational, not final—preliminary, not ultimate. He next proceeds to the primers, and having put monosyllables together, and seen, as it were, the faintest outline of an idea gleaming through the words, he is more and more "content." He knows that this process must be accomplished, or he must remain in ignorance of the language. Patiently, therefore, he plods on until charmed with the numbers of the poet and informed by the narrations of the historian. The analogy would hold good also in the matter of pursuing a journey. The traveller is "content" with each mile, each scene, each tunnel, not on its own account, but because each brings him nearer his desired destination. Thus it should be in building human character. To-day a joy, to-morrow a grief; now on the hill-head, inhaling the life of the mountains; anon in the deep valley, cloaked with fogs or pelted with concentrated storms; known yet unknown, honoured yet dishonoured, strong yet weak, passing through all the paradoxes which constitute a rich and manifold experience. We take life by

instalments ; we receive light by glimpses ; we accept our joys in succession, and our sorrows come one by one ; we are "content" with each, because, being anchored in the infinite ocean of divine love, we have "a good hope through grace" ; we believe, therefore we are "content" ; we do not count ourselves to have apprehended, but we "press towards the mark" ; and we go along life's rugged way, saying, now with a song and anon with a sob, "I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness."

This question of contentment is emphatically one of great principles. The moment we close our eyes to the ultimate purposes of the divine government, we are enclosed in utter night. Our sorrows blind us to everything but themselves. We persist in looking at the things which are seen, rather than at the things which are not seen. We weep over the lock, forgetting that the key is at hand ! The mysteries of life cannot be read in the artificial light of time. Heaven must interpret earth. The secrets of the first volume will be fully revealed in the second. The morning cannot tell the story of mid-day ;—noon must be its own interpreter ! Spring can only sing its own sweet lyric ; it must leave summer to utter its deep, full, thrilling song ! Don't expect too much from earth ; this acre, of which Death has taken a lease for

all time, is not spacious enough to grow fruits on which immortality can feed. There is also a reflection arising from the fact that boundaries which we cannot pass are set round about us. Job asks, as if affronted, "Am I a sea or a whale that thou settest a watch over me ?" Jesus recalls this fact of our limitation, and founds upon it an argument : "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature ? If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest ?" As if he had inquired, "What does all your discontent amount to ? Why attempt to do that which is impossible ? Why not accept the allotments of paternal providence, and regard them as ladders on which angels descend and ascend in their ministry as servants of man ?" The Apostle continues the remonstrance, and in his expostulation gives words of most inspiring assurance : "Let your conversation be without covetousness ; and be content with such things as ye have." This is severe, this is dogmatic ; but listen, and you will see that it is the dogmatism of love : "For he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." In this epistle, too, the Apostle dwells on the same theme. He talks much about himself. In many a verse round about the text the first personal pronoun may be found. He says,

"I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need." This is personal detail. It sounds like boasting. The voice appears to be the voice of a man well pleased with himself. But we must hear his whole statement; for just as our rashness is about to pronounce the Apostle an egotist, he reveals the golden secret of his mastery in the minor spheres by saying, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." It is enough! We deemed the boast presumptuous, whereas there blushes upon it the humility of deepest self-abasement. True contentment comes alone from Jesus. He understands us, and meets every requirement of our needy nature. He created angels, but he redeemed man; if the expression may be allowed, Christ is more closely identified with man than with any other class of intelligences in the universe. He bought him with his own precious blood. Only, therefore, as man is vitally related to Christ can he enjoy the contentment which is too profound to be agitated by changing circumstances.

"These surface troubles come and go
Like waves upon the sea;
The deeper depths are out of reach
To all, my God, but thee."

Need I employ the argument thus outlined for the purpose of clearing the field of fatal misapprehensions? Let no one quote these words as a plea for intellectual indolence. The wilfully ignorant man is not at liberty to desecrate the language by saying, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." No book is so provocative of intellectual exertion as God's book. From end to end there is a call for thought and reasoning and consideration and growth. Every time the Bible asks man a question it acknowledges the dignity, independence, and responsibility of human reason. Will you think of this, you who thoughtlessly talk about the dogmatism of revelation and the tyranny of faith? What more could even God himself do than submit the profoundest questions to your personal consideration and decision? There is in reality no book which confers so much honour on human reason as the very book which is blasphemously charged with ignoring it. Let no man use this text as a plea for moral deformity, saying, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." This is not contentment. Contentment is not a negative, but a positive condition of being. To claim contentment while in a state of unpardoned guilt is to trifle with the foundations of moral life

and government, and to insult, in one terrific act, the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. Sin and discontentment can never be dissociated. "What God hath joined together let not man put asunder." I will not therefore permit the rebellious to chant the words which can be truly uttered only by the lips of the loyal. Alas! are not the best of men occasionally rebellious? Much have I been reprov'd on this point. It was once my lot to wait upon a dying loved one—to mark her shrivelling cheek, and to weep over her dimming eyes. Such discipline never befel me. Aforetime I had fled from death, and had never looked upon any human being while enfolded in the last undreaming sleep. But now Death came to wage war on my own hearth, and there was terrible earnestness in his method. He smote youth and beauty and tenderness, and then mocked the ruin he was working. In a whisper the dying one asked me to read some of the words of Jesus—she knew that Jesus had fought and conquered the last enemy, and much she loved the Saviour's name. Never was harder task allotted me, for grief conquers speech. I would rather have faced a ravening lion than undertaken that duty. I read, with hurried expression, how the blind man spake to Jesus about his blindness, saying, "Jesus,

thou Son of David, have mercy on me." Then the dying hearer said, "Don't you be rebellious, but utter that cry mightily." The word cleft my heart. The dying seeking to inspire the living with hope and confidence so impressed me, that when the last sweet breath passed from the stricken breast, I called her more than conqueror.

Do not cherish your griefs; they do but wear out the finest springs and faculties of nature. You must have grief. It is the lot of man: but let grief lean her aching head on great principle: let her pour her tears on the pitying bosom of the Saviour; and then round about her shall shine the rainbow which ever speaks of an unchanging covenant.

It would appear as though some persons delighted to prolong their grief. This may be affirmed even of some who profess Christianity. From the ancient Church there comes a voice which such mistaken ones should heed: "Fret not thyself in any wise to do evil." Are there not predictions which proclaim the final conquest of the trustful heart, and the perpetual overthrow of the rebellious spirit? "Let not thine heart envy sinners: but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long." If we found our judgment upon mere accidents, we shall stumble as the blind, we shall err as those who have no under-

standing. "When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; it is that they shall be destroyed for ever." God shall mock the men of false contentment, and on their boasted palaces he shall hail destroying fire! "There shall be no reward to the evil man; the candle of the wicked shall be put out." We are not called upon to criticise God's moral government. God is his own interpreter. "Cast thy burden upon the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass." This is the only method by which the spirit can know the

meaning, the quiet, the joy, of perpetual content. Our repining dishonours Christ. It implies a lack of power on his part to give satisfaction to the aching heart. Every act of distrust is an act of dishonour towards the Saviour. Think, if Christ can carry the universe, is he not able to carry the handful of dust which you call your "property"? If he can govern and control all the affairs of creation, is he unequal to the supervision of your insignificant circumstances? Be wise! Be wise now! "Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart."

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is."—
HEB. x. 25.

Observe that the text does not point to secret devotion, but to open religious fellowship. There is a devotion which is to be hidden from all human knowledge, in which the soul discloses itself without reserve to the scrutiny of the Most High. To neglect such devotion is to dry up the springs which rise from the very rocks. Without it there can be no spiritual life. Yet there is something beyond it. What solitude begins sympathy completes. Into every

lonely sanctuary there goes this rousing admonition: "Forsake not the assembly of the saints: claim thy kindred: having communed quietly and deeply with God, go forth with the whole Church to make a joyful noise unto the Rock of Salvation."

There is a subtle and indescribable power of sympathy in public worship. Individually we sing the more expressively because of the joyful and animating song of those who are round about us. Our idea of worship is enlarged. We get glimpses of that splendid possibility—a whole world engaged in common prayer! Though we may come to the as-

sembly faint in heart and clouded in hope, the very gathering of the host, or the thunder of the song, may help to revive and brighten our life. It is in worship as in friendship. Conversation is often inspiration. Sympathy is help. A loving tone recalls our expiring courage, and the grasp of a friendly hand steadies us when we are dizzy through exhaustion or fear. So it is in public worship. The face of a congregation has often been to myself as the face of a friend, and the voice of its song as an assurance of comradeship in the long hard strife of daily living. We are apt to become lonely. The heart longs to hear a footstep in the dim and silent passages through which this life often moves. Such a footstep we hear in the sanctuary, and our hope comes back. We listen, and are made glad; we pray together, and our broken heart is made whole again. "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea even fainteth for the courts of the Lord. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness."

The day of the Lord comes with a rare and most precious sweetness to men who have had a week of hard work. All the week long we have had anxiety,

trouble, disquiet—we have lived in excitement, in noise, in strife; our heads have been bowed down to the dust, and we have been seeking for our bread amongst the stones of the earth; how sweet, then, is the sound of the bell which announces the light of the Sabbath, and rings us to the banquet of the sanctuary! We pause for a while. The very act of standing still does us good. The soul, over which the rough cold wind has been fiercely blowing day after day, enjoys the shelter, and comforts itself by looking towards the light! Truly in his sanctuary God is unto us as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

Public worship helps us to see deeply and clearly into the unity of human nature. On the streets we are many; in the sanctuary we are one. In taste and whim and special fancy we are an innumerable throng; but in the true hunger of the heart we are as one man. In other places we may meet as groups, but in the house of prayer we meet as a race. When the poet rings his silver bell he gathers a knot of admirers around him; when the painter throws open his door a few ardent devotees pay him the compliment of their applause. But when the divinely called and

divinely qualified preacher utters his testimony he speaks to an undivided race; he knocks at the door of the common heart of the world; the rich and the poor, the out-worn veteran and the little child know him to be master of the universal language and bearer of the universal message. A wondrous, sad, glorious sight is a great congregation of worshippers! What histories are represented here this night! What madness of ambition, what recklessness of the best gifts, what sin done in darkness, what plots of avarice, what brokenheartedness, what wealth, poverty, loneliness, pain, what strength, fury, nobleness, truth! yet we are all one, one in sin, one in want. I pray God we may be one in the ineffable ecstatic joy of pardon through the Son of God.

Unrelieved solitude narrows a man's nature. We correct and complete one another. We settle each other into right proportions. We see greater breadths of the bounty and love of God when we compare our common experiences or utter our common thanksgivings. The hermit is a smaller man than the philanthropist. The hermit is manhood at a minimum; the philanthropist is manhood at a maximum. The solitary worshipper is overweighted with himself; the public worshipper is modified and stimulated by the surroundings which encompass

him. A man must come out of himself if he would see himself; he must see the completion of himself in every other man in all the human race. Thus, fellowship becomes the true individuality. The man in company is really more himself than if he were in solitude; he is more quickened; he is called upon to answer a greater number of demands, and he reaches more nearly the ideal standard of manhood.

It is not uncommon to hear men talking in some such words as— "When I worship I go out into the temple of nature: I uncover my head in the aisles of the forest: I hush myself under the minster roof of the stars: I listen to the psalm of the sea." This kind of talk sounds as if it meant something. It touches one side of life; how far it touches the other remains to be seen. As Christians we claim to have sympathy with nature. From the rash talk of certain avowed lovers of nature it would seem that Christians, by reason of their Christianity, did not know the sea when they were looking at it, and that they required to have the sun pointed out with a rod before they could distinguish it from the moon. I love nature. I have seen some of her pictures, and heard many of her voices. She is always full of suggestion. When she clothes herself youthfully as in spring; when she blushes with all the

hopes and sweet promises of summer; when she sits in all the quiet matronliness of autumn; when her hair is white with age in winter;—throughout the whole there is beauty. We know her riches—what diamonds sparkle in her crown; what colours beautify her robe; what an aureole encircles her majestic head. We know her well. We have drunk her dew in the morning, and owned that no chalice held wine so good. Again and again we have been blessed by her soothing ministry. But let me tell you something farther. I will be frank, that you may understand me. Nature is to me often the saddest of all sights. She is but a succession of phases. I cannot keep her at any point. The spring dies; the summer vanishes; autumn delivers her gifts and turns away; winter is a presence I would not detain; the sun is but for an appointed time, and the stars withdraw long before I have half-counted them. More than that: nature is but an alphabet or, at most, a primer. I soon begin to find that she has no answer to my deepest wants, and that I can ask her questions which will stagger her with dismay. She pleases my intellect; she amuses my fancy; she piques my curiosity; but in all her meads and groves she has no plant which can heal the fatal wound of my sin! If I ask her for mercy, I am as one that raves in madness; if I ask her to

find me a hiding-place from God, she turns away as from an insult! I am a sinner, and must find an answer to my sin. My heart aches, and I ask for a physician that can extract the pain. My conscience tortures me, and I cry for rest. Then I find the spiritual sanctuary; I pass within the veil; I see the Cross, the Priest, the Sacrifice, and ever after nature is but an outer court, and grace is the presence-chamber of the redeeming King.

Application:—1. Come to worship. 2. Resist the influence of a bad example, “as the manner of some is.”—The object of public worship is twofold: First—Edification, having in view the stimulus and encouragement of believers, and their defence from manifold temptation. Second—Conversion, having in view the salvation of those who are afar off.—A special blessing is their’s who love the house of God; their own dwelling shall be watched and blessed. “They shall prosper that love thee.”

“For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants and delivered unto them his goods.”—MATT. xxv. 14.

By the kingdom of heaven do not understand the future and

invisible state. Understand rather the Church of God as it is seen upon the earth, and the whole scheme and system of things as represented especially in the person and ministry of Jesus Christ. There is hardly any expression in the Holy Scriptures that has so wide a signification as this expression, "the kingdom of heaven." We can, therefore, at best but give a general idea of what it purports to comprehend. According to the teaching of Jesus Christ in this parable, the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country. Looking at the scheme of things that is round about us, and of which we ourselves form a part, what is more evident than that the Great Master seems to be a long way off? So much so, that many men ask, "Where is he?" and some are inclined to doubt whether he has any existence at all. It is not unfrequently questioned whether there be a divine administration of affairs. Jesus Christ anticipated all these objections when he represented the kingdom of heaven as a man travelling into a far country. The side of the apparent divine absence was not forgotten by Jesus Christ, the great and holy Teacher of mankind. He knew that in the thinking of man there would come up a suspicion, that if God really did exist, and did really govern the affairs of life, he would, now and again at

least, present himself personally amongst the subjects of his crown. Therefore, in anticipation of this difficulty, with infinite beauty, he represented the kingdom of heaven as having that side upon it which we may call the side of divine absence from the affairs of men. It appears that the man represented in the text called his own servants and delivered unto them his goods. It seems as if God had done this unto us. He has delivered unto us great bounty, immeasurable, priceless property; and he has, as it were, turned his back upon us, and gone a long way from the scene of our activities. He has delivered unto us his sunshine and his living air, health and reason and energy, and this manifold power which we enjoy and possess. These are the "goods" of God. Jesus Christ here teaches us that we have nothing that we have not received. Whatever we hold in our right hand, we hold as part of the property of God. We are servants, not masters; representatives, not principals. And we ought the more keenly to realise our stewardship and representativeness, because the God whom we represent is in "a far country." Every man amongst us has some of the "goods" of God; he himself is part of the divine treasury; and as for the things that are round about him, they are given to him for his use and enjoyment, that he may increase them and

return them to the great Giver with addition. This is the great purpose of life. Things are not given to us to waste; they are given to us with a specific object on the part of the Giver. We may receive them with coldness and indifference, as if they terminated in themselves; or we may see the divine purpose running all through in these things, and respond to its presence and its claims. Let us clearly understand that it is open to a man, if he be so disposed, to live blindly and deafly, and to see nothing beyond the common horizon that apparently bounds things. He may so live, if he be disposed. Man can animalise himself. He can live away from light and from openness and from healthful activity, towards darkness and secrecy and death!

“And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability, and straightway took his journey.”—MATT. XXV. 15.

Here is the great principle of divine sovereignty. Almighty God does not start every man in life upon the same line, with the same advantages and endowments. He deals out his bounties as it pleaseth him, and none can stay his hand, or justly say unto him, “What doest thou?” He is Lord! The

throne is his, and he does as he pleases among the armies of heaven and among the children of men. To one man he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one. Here is distribution upon the principle of sovereignty. He did not ask each man, “What will you have?” There are some things he does not leave to the judgment of men. He settles them for us. He puts us into certain positions, and invests us with certain responsibilities, without consulting our will at all. What holds good with individual life, holds good also with nations. To one nation God has given five talents, to another two, and to another one. We do not find the same light of civilisation around the whole globe. One land is in darkness and in bondage—ignorant, enslaved—hardly above the level of beasthood; and upon another nation there shines almost infinite glory, as if God, in some great act of partiality, had concentrated his love upon that specific empire. These are matters of fact. Reason about them as we may, there stands the fact that each man has his special endowment, each nation its special privilege. In these allotments we find the sovereignty of the divine administration. It is well. If we lay hold of that doctrine of divine sovereignty aright, it will give us rest in the midst of all the tumult and din and chaos of the present

scene. More, it will make us magnanimous in our view of one another ; it will make us mutually loving, truthful, admiring, helpful. Has my brother five talents ? The Master gave them to him. Have I two ? I hold them from the same Lord. Hast thou one ? Thou art a servant in the same empire. We did not give ourselves these talents. The Lord is the distributor. He sits above all, and he does as seemeth good in his sight. A right apprehension, therefore, of this doctrine of divine sovereignty settles the affairs of man upon a solid basis, gives us a right and noble view of one another, and delivers us from those petty vexations which otherwise would torment and torture our very life. Shall a man boast who has many talents ? Why should he boast ? Does he not expose himself to the retort, "What hast thou, that thou hast not received" ? Is it an easy thing to hold many talents ? It is the most difficult of all things. We say of some men, who may appear to us to be gifted with many advantages and to have almost the honour of genius resting upon them, "What a beautiful and sunny life must theirs be !" What enjoyments are open to them that are not available to us ! Did we possess their advantages, and stand upon their eminences, our life would be lighted with sunshine, and there should be in us no darkness, nor pain, nor sorrow."

In so talking we know not what we say. The man who has most talents, and realises that fact most clearly, and responds to its claims most honestly, is the man who knows the meaning of the sharpest pain, who carries daily a crushing burden ; and in proportion to his sensibility is he exposed to manifold suffering, to much self-examination, and it may be self-torture.

There is, then, not only a distribution of talents, but there is a distribution of pains and enjoyments proportioned to our lot in life. So that things are more level and more equal than from some points of view they may appear to be. We speak of the inequalities of life ; we murmur because we are not all upon an equal line. When all things are measured and summed up, it will be found that there is more equality of life, more equality of enjoyment and of suffering than in some of our superficial moments we have supposed to exist.

The Sovereign having distributed the gifts, took his journey into a far country. There is a time to retire, and to leave men to work out the mission and purpose of their life. There is a possibility of God making himself to be felt too near. Herein is the grace and wisdom of God : that he appears to be a long way off ; that he gives us the opportunity to work out what he has put within

us; that he develops in us strength and purpose and individuality, by apparent withdrawment from the immediate scene of our ministry; that he is not always overpowering us by his presence and dazzling us by excess of light. He withdraws, as it were; withdraws, in the sense of relieving us of that terribleness of his presence with which he might visit us—though in his withdrawal he is as near as ever in all that is tender in care, in all that is pathetic in sympathy, in all that is helpful in wisdom and in strength. Here, then, we have things apparently left to themselves. The king has come down; he has called his servants together; he has made distribution of his gifts; now he is withdrawn, and things are left to work out their own law.

“Then he that had received five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also made other two.”—MATT. xxv. 16, 17.

Here is the putting of talents to use; the honest, simple, righteous endeavour to make the best of life. There is a discontent that is righteous, as well as a discontent that is profane. There is a restlessness which means rebellion and distrust and suspicion;

and there is a restlessness which means anxiety to do the right, to do the best, to make the utmost of every passing gleam of light, and to fill up every hour with some noble deed. How is it with ourselves? If a man shall take his talents and rest upon them, he will lose them little by little. In ten years the indolent man exhausts himself. However brilliant the endowments with which he began life, if he do not use them, put them out and make the best of them by fair schooling and discipline, they will fall into decay; and he who began life as a king will go out of it as a beggar! Activity multiplies power. He who would be strong must use his strength. He who would have much must give much. He who would enrich himself must seem to undergo a process of impoverishment. “Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die!” We must understand this law of putting things out from us, losing sight of them for a time, that they—working in harmony with the divine law and administration of things—may come back to us more golden, more precious than when we parted with them. He will get most good who does most good. He will be the ablest man who every day puts out his ability to some good use. He will be the powerful preacher, in the long run, who makes every

appearance a great occasion; not he who says, "This occasion is not worthy of me,"—but he who will spend himself on one man, knowing that one soul saved from death is honour enough with which to crown the most industrious and beneficent lifetime.

"But he that had received one, went and dug in the earth, and hid his lord's money."—
MATT. xxv. 18.

The ground which received the one talent would also have received the five. There is room enough on earth to find graves for the finest abilities and the noblest powers. Every man can be his own sexton. You can easily find spades enough to dig a grave for your talents and abilities, your money and your time, and all the forces of your life. But understand that in burying your talent, you are burying yourself; in burying aught that God has given, you are burying part of your very life. There is a burial that has no resurrection. There is a burial as well as a sowing. We sow seed; we may bury it if we please, so that it never can reappear. How is it with ourselves? For this is a subject which comes back upon us, again and again, with severe and poignant enquiry. Had you but one talent with which to

begin life? That is a reason why you should have been more industrious, if possible. The man who has five talents may, we imagine, sometimes take a little rest; he may say, "I can afford to stand still, to wait." But he who has only one talent, should he not be more painstaking and more industrious, knowing that having only one lamp, if that light should go out he would be left in darkness? Let no man despair; however feeble his power, it can be used. There is not a single individual who cannot contribute something to the sum total of human enjoyment and progress. It may be very little, but the universe is made up of atoms. Our influence may be very small, yet when it is absent there is something wanting to the completeness of human enjoyment. Have we many talents? Let us be humble, self-controlled, reverent, knowing that we owe these great possessions to the Sovereign Lord, the King of heaven and of earth! Have we only one talent? We are not responsible for the number. It was God's gift; he did not give us more. Blame the Almighty, if you are disposed to censure, but withhold your reproaches from the individual who is entrusted with but a solitary gift.

"After a long time the lord of those servants cometh and reckoneth with them."—MATT. xxv. 19.

We were uneasy when he went away; we did not understand fully what his withdrawal meant. But we now recover our steadiness and our faith. The lord of those servants returned. What to do? He had been a long time away. Had he forgotten the circumstance which marked his departure? He has been away for most of a lifetime; surely he will have forgotten the particulars of his last interview with his servants. No. For what purpose did he come? He came for the purpose of reckoning with his servants. There is a time of judgment in life; there is a time of recall and examination. Things are not to go on for ever as they appear to be going on to-day. The Lord is coming by the course which it hath pleased himself to appoint. He takes not his time from the faces of our dials. He knows what his purpose is, and he is working his way back again to the scene from which he had apparently withdrawn. Are we prepared for reckoning time? Assure me that there will be no reckoning,—still it were better for me to employ my talents, because I have enjoyment in their use. Say the Lord will never come back,—still I am better for trying

to make others better. There is no deed of charity which I do that does not instantly pay me in my heart. There is no act of discipline through which I pass with honest purpose that does not add something to my strength and to my joy. And were there nothing over the edge of this world but an infinite abyss of darkness and death, he is the wise man and the good servant who works according to a moral and spiritual plan, who works by faith and in the spirit of love, and who lives to make the world better for those who have to succeed him in life. But we are distinctly told that there is to be a period of reckoning. Every man has to stand before the Lord. Nothing is forgotten—though the text tells us, it was a long time that the lord of the servants was absent—yet he came. The Lord is not slack concerning his promises, as some men count slackness. A thousand years in his sight are but as yesterday! A thousand years are but as one day, and one day is as a thousand years. All our notions of time are set aside, are ignored, and God works according to the beating of his own heart and the movement of his own love. But surely—and this is the great point—he will come to take account of us, to look over the book of our life, and the whole story of our earthly existence, to know

what we have done with the endowments with which he started us. Are we responsible for the number of the talents? No. Upon what, then, is our responsibility determined? Upon the use to which we put those talents. The man who received five talents, and who made them other five, was hailed with the words, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" and the man who had the two talents, and who had honestly doubled them, was received with precisely the same benediction. God did not say, "I must pay more attention to the man who has made the five ten than to the man who has made two four." He received them as honest men—men who had done the very best with the talents with which he had entrusted them. And this is it in which we find our rest and our contentment, and in which we recover our strength and trust in the righteousness and grace of God. You started life with five talents—you doubled them. Your brother started life with two talents, and he doubled them. God will say to each, "Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Shall I fall back and say, "I had only two to begin with: why should I go forward and speak of my four? there is another man who has turned his five into ten—he has more than

twice what I have. How can I show my face in the judgment?" You are responsible, not for the number of your talents, but for the use you put them to. The man who had one talent, and who might have made them two, loses the very heaven to which the most richly endowed servant was welcome.

And the Lord called the servants faithful. Is there anything we value amongst ourselves more than faithfulness, honesty, constancy—punctual, critical, scrupulous virtue? Do we not trust the faithful one? do we not praise faithfulness above all other virtues when we are talking about relationships which subsist between us and amongst us? It is faithfulness that God values—not brilliance, not greatness, not astonishing, dazzling splendour; but reality, honour, honesty, diligence. Herein it is, that the appeal of the Gospel comes to every man—to the man of great powers, and the man of the feeblest influence; to the man of the highest honour, and to the man of the remotest obscurity. Shall it be with us to-night a vow of faithfulness? There is no time to lose. We are to be faithful in the matter of time. We are not to allow a single hour to be wasted. Man cannot recall his yesterdays. Yesterday is gone for ever; the gate is shut and the key is in the hand of God, and no man can

take it back again. This, then, is a call to us to be faithful. What became of the one man who was unfaithful? He was called an unprofitable servant. God cannot bear unprofitableness. There is no verse in the holy testimony that is in favour of unproductiveness. Is there a fig tree there without fruit, disappointing the hunger of Christ? It withers away under his frown! Is there a man who, having advantages entrusted to him, has not made the most of them, has not used them—has rather allowed them to fall into disuse and decay?—God says, "He is an unprofitable servant, and he must go into outer darkness; his example would corrupt the universe if I were to allow him to exist amongst other men who are industrious and faithful; he might gradually chill the ardour of their love and impair the completeness of their integrity." What of the talents? The talent must not be lost. The talent is not sent after him; the talent is redistributed. There is nothing lost in the universe but the son of perdition. Everything that can be used to any advantage shall be gathered up; the fragments shall be collected, that nothing be lost. So understand this: though we may waste our opportunities and make no use of our talent, we cannot destroy the gold that God gave us to begin with. We cannot put an end to the

talent, whatever it was, with which God started us in life. We may commit suicide, but the talent is left. Nothing is lost. God takes it back again and gives it to the good and faithful servant, that he may have an abundance.

What goods have we received? I charge you with having received the Son of God,—with having had entrusted to you all the doctrines, precepts, commands, and exhortations of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, God the Son. We have had opportunities of knowing truth, of seeing far into its meaning; we have had opportunities of being redeemed, saved, born again. The Spirit has striven with us; time has been extended to us; precept has followed precept; loving exhortation has followed loving exhortation,—until they have swelled into a thunder-peal of desire and importunity and urgency. God will come to require an account of our use of these things. A talent cannot be allowed to pass through a man's hand and yet to be the same at the end as it was at the beginning. If a man had but one verse of God's great truth spoken to him, that is a point whereupon judgment shall be established. If he has heard one appeal, that one appeal shall be recalled to his memory, and his responsibility shall be determined upon it. What, then, is our case? When men of all times have spoken to us;

when arguments have been set before us that might have overturned the most stubborn conclusions of disbelief; when appeals have been breathed into our hearing, and set to work in our hearts, that might have warmed us into ardent love; when God's book has been written in our own tongue, so that every man might read in secret for himself; when the holy day has brought, week by week, its precious treasures to our door;—what account shall we give? This is a solemn question! This is the question of questions. Why should we blink it? Why should we avoid it? It is our joy to know that the Lord will come and reckon with us. Are we prepared for the judgment that will supervene in human affairs? What an account some men will have to give! Why, they seem to be in close proximity to the very kingdom of heaven; they seem to have been reared in the very vision of the skies. They had pious parents, they had religious teaching; from their very infancy they were taught to pray; one of the first names they said was the word Jesus, and ever since they have had opportunities of studying truth and knowing it and applying it. What an account must theirs be? How brilliant on the one side,—how glorious to have given a whole lifetime to the Son of God! So that there

will be but little change for them, from earth to heaven; they have already had such close communion with the Father and with the Son and with the Holy Ghost, and such delight in sacred service! What a terrible account on the other hand! All wasted; the memories of childhood disregarded; the entreaties of early life lost upon the stubborn heart; and the door of opportunity passed by without being embraced and entered!

The question is a very solemn one with myself, as a preacher of the divine word. Have I been faithful in my ministry? Have I been urgent in my entreaties with men? Have I spared any effort that I might save some? Have I forgotten myself that I might benefit others, leaving behind all things that could minister to mere vanity, or to the success of the transient hour? Have I spent myself on those living, vital questions which determine human condition and human destiny?

It is a solemn question for parents. Have you been ministers of God in your own houses? Have you been as the light of heaven amidst the circle of your own home-life? Have your children been enabled to read God's word in your characters? or have you so lived that your own children will be startled to find that you are in public making a profession of the Christian faith?

It is a solemn word for the poorest man and woman amongst us: How am I using my one talent? Am I mourning over it, opposing it, repining before God? Or am I contentedly and lovingly endeavouring to double it, so that when the Lord comes back I may hail him and say, "Thou didst give me one—I give thee two." Hath God given any but one talent? There is the germ of reproduction in every gift of God. There is nothing he has put in our power that we cannot increase—increase in number and value; and so he pays us by seeing the work he has given us prospering in our hands. Has he given thee one tiny seed? There are harvests in that germ! Be careful how thou dost use it. Thou mayest crush it between stones and take the life out of it; or thou mayest hide it in the soil, and under the ministry of the earth and the dew and the light it shall come up a golden harvest. Oh, that we may live wisely and well, and be found at last, not only without shamefacedness, but with rejoicing and gladness, before God! Amen.

"Our brethren have discouraged our heart."—DEUT. i. 28.

We are often discouraged simply because we want to be discouraged. Our spiritual vitality becomes low,

and then even the sound of a leaf driven by the wind affrights us. Men who ought, by reason of their faith, to be masters of circumstances, lose their faith, and then look upon circumstances as indications of the will of God. We often blame "our brethren" when we ought to fix the blame upon ourselves. Either our brethren will overcome us or we will overcome our brethren. The man of faith ought to be triumphant, and not the man of fear. It is astounding how easily Christian men are discouraged in the prosecution of their work. This is an anomaly which would seem to be impossible, seeing that God has ranged himself on the Christian side. Whilst it is sublimely true that Christian heroism has excelled every form of human courage, it is also humiliatingly true that no weaker men are to be found than many who profess the Christian name. Christianity is distinctively a religion of encouragement, because it is a religion of hope. Were our hearts right before God we should draw our encouragement from him, and not from our brethren. We are too prone to look for human inspiration and comfort. The fountain of our strength is in heaven, not upon earth. Men should remember how easy it is to discourage others. We have but to excite a fear, to magnify a shadow, to suggest an unpleasant possibility, and

instantly many hearts will be deterred in the execution of their holy purposes. Men in official positions should be men of high hope, that they may be able to inspire their followers with confidence. Men who have not this gift of hope should not accept official positions, because they will discourage others, and create precedents which will obstruct all spiritual progress. Business qualifications, long experience,

substantial wealth are all to be regarded as without value in the absence of faith, hope, courage, and resoluteness that cannot be deterred. In Christian leadership faith is the supreme qualification. On what are we to fall back in periods of discouragement? The Bible is rich in reply: "The Lord shall fight for you." "Our God shall fight for us." "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

AD CLERUM.

THERE is a permanent quantity in the Bible about whose inspiration the Christian Church is substantially agreed. Probably we shall never have a definition of inspiration, which does not itself need to be defined. By inspiration I mean a statement, doctrine, message, or discipline, which separates itself from all ordinary thinking, which so far separates itself as to throw ordinary thinking into obvious contrast, and which associates itself with such a quality of moral discipline as to exclude the idea that itself can be the fantasy of a wanton imagination. I lay much stress upon the quality of the discipline; it is not mere pain; it is not a trick of vanity; it is not a sordid spectacle set up for sordid uses; on the contrary, it searches the heart; it purifies the motive; it abases and chastens the imagination; and above all it creates a desire and a yearning for the good of others all the world over akin to the love which created the cross. This conception of inspiration enables me to accept the Bible, correctly translated into English, as the Word of God. The Bible addresses itself to the greatest subjects—Creation, Providence, Redemption, Sanctification, Destiny. Upon all these subjects its tone is dogmatic, solemn, impressive. The conceptions of the Bible are as large as its subjects. It guesses nothing, postulates nothing, apologises for nothing. We may apologise for the Bible: the Bible never apologises for itself. All this would be incomplete,

and as evidence would be only partial (at best suggestive and inferential), but for that peculiar quality of discipline upon which the Bible inexorably insists. The Bible makes no bid for popularity. It risks its popularity by its severity. It does not ask for homage based upon concession. It does not approach our confidence through the medium of our vanity. It takes us back to our ignorance, our weakness, and our shame, that it may take us forward to God's wisdom, Christ's almightiness, and the Spirit's miracle of holiness. Thus the Bible is not only a sublime revelation of God, it is also a penetrating and sanctifying discipline of man; and because of this double action—this complete and effective ministry—I have no scruple in speaking of the Bible as "the Word of God," founding that title, not upon anything claimed by the Bible for itself, but upon its supreme content and purpose. If the Bible were not the Word of God, or if the title the Word of God were a blasphemy or even a vital mistake, I think that having regard to its own limitation and its special purpose, it would have warned me against making an idol of it, and would have said, "See thou do it not, for I am only a record of a progressive revelation and I abound in nearly every kind of error not literal only but moral also." If I had the faintest scruple as to estimating the Bible as the Word of God it would be dissolved by the fact that the Bible constantly seeks me in God's name, offers me God's love, welcomes me to God's pardon, and constrains me to obedience to God's will. So large, so tender, is the Spirit of this wondrous Book! The Bible was not written to tell me what the Jews did, but to tell me what God did through the Jews. What the patriarchs or the Jews did three thousand years ago can have only an archæological interest for me, but the moment I see the divine movement or the divine purpose in the Book I say,

"I will turn aside and see this great sight" how in so small a space I can see the genesis of history and the very outline of God! Under the happy influence of this feeling I have great confidence and intense joy—even if without technical and formal authority from the Book itself—in prefacing the public reading of the Scriptures with the solemn invitation—"Let us read the Word of God." Another minister would, I infer, substitute this more discriminating form, if he used any form at all, "Let us read the sacred and inspired record of the Word of God." If it came to a question of internal claim on the part of the Bible itself, I should find no difficulty in upholding at least the equality of the simpler designation.

What is the permanent quantity that is in the Bible, the quantity, in fact, without which there could be no Bible in the sense in which we understand that term? It is, compendiously, *the revelation of God*; it is, in detail, every law that can beneficially affect the condition and the perfecting of human life,—“profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely with every good work.” It is evident that the man who wrote the 2nd Epistle to Timothy believed that some scripture, somewhere, written by some pens, was inspired; that there was some writing somewhere which he regarded as “Holy Scripture,” and that such Holy Scripture undertook the whole spiritual culture and perfecting of man. Now, if I could lay my hands on that Scripture, and if I believed it to be what Paul says it was, I could have no difficulty in regarding it as the Word of God. It cannot be too carefully marked that the reference is to something written, and therefore something that could be read; something different from a Personality,

yet not opposed to it ; a writing, a pamphlet, a book of some sort. In the present inquiry that fact is of vital consequence. Jesus Christ was not a written book. It is with a written form that this inquiry concerns itself. You cannot substitute the word Christ for the word Scriptures in such a passage as this: "Beginning at Moses he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." There is a writing, and there is a Christ. According to the Apostle Paul any scripture which is not profitable—vitally and permanently useful—for teaching, for reproof, for correction which is in righteousness, which does not complete the man of God and furnish him unto every good work, cannot be regarded as inspired, and every Scripture covering and fulfilling this ministry may be accepted as inspired by the Holy Spirit. Now, on the ground of history and on the ground of personal experience, it is claimed that the Bible, as we have it, and as we translate it into all languages, brings men to God, makes them men of God, fills them with thoughts of God, and creates in them a desire to be holy after the manner of God, and because it does this, does it openly and subtly, does it constantly and unexceptionally, it is no exaggeration of claim to represent it as "the Word of God." Nor can we so re-edit the Bible as to say with definiteness that the exclusion of what may be called local and limited history would not affect the parts which are avowedly moral, spiritual, universal, and permanent. The Bible is impregnated through and through with one infinite and glorious purpose. Take out of the Bible every passage that refers to God, that accounts for creation, that relates to man, that dwells upon Redemption, Forgiveness, Righteousness, and Sanctification ; take away all the passages bearing upon the restoration and comfort of the human heart, the purpose of human discipline, the subjugation of sin, and the salvation of the world, and what

is there left? So immensely do these great subjects overshadow all other subjects, and so exquisitely do their several modes of treatment constitute one noble harmony, that it would be a conscious injustice on my part—I dare not speak for others—to hesitate to pay homage to the Bible as verily and abidingly “the Word of God.”

It has been said by a German writer that the difference between false religions and true religions is that the one has documents and the other has living prophets. It is happily the distinction of the Christian religion that it has both. It is a marvellous combination of the ancient and the modern. From my point of view the Bible is at once the oldest and the newest of books. I have found it safe to suspect the newness which has no antiquity, and to disregard the antiquity which has no modern applications. Time is old, but every summer is new. The earth is old, but the grass withereth and the flower fadeth. When the flower blooms it is Eternity smiling in time. Christianity has indeed its documents, the individuality of each entering into and enriching the individuality of the whole, Genesis and Job are not the same in style, but it is the same man who is tempted, the same devil who tempts, the same God who protects, the same God who rules the issue. The Chronicles of the Kings and the Acts of the Apostles are varied enough in style and action, yet there is something within the whole movement and evolution which makes them hard reading for atheism. So wondrously have we seen Providence working in personal experience and in national history, that it is now evident that men may be working in different ages and different countries in total ignorance of each other's existence and labours, and yet serving a common purpose, as if moved by a common impulse. There may not be so much difference

in age and country and language and environment as we sometimes suppose, or within all the accidental difference there may be an invisible link—even that wondrous line, beyond sight and touch, which stretches “from everlasting to everlasting.” The atom and the planet are both from God—the single soul and the consummated race.

The Christian religion has documents. To one test they may be fairly subjected. Can any man add one true line to the moral or spiritual code which is set up in the Bible? Can any man add to the tender balms and solaces provided in the Bible for broken hearts and wounded spirits? We have had centuries of education; this age represents the latest wisdom of the world. Can we, with such advantages, add a solitary tittle to those Scriptures which are “profitable for teaching, for reproof, for instruction which is in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work”? That is a fair challenge. It is in the line of questions which are asked in the Bible itself. God challenges the deities manufactured in the smithies of the world. He says that no man can add a cubit to his own stature, or turn one hair black or white. Can man enlarge the circumference of the earth by one half-inch? Why not, then, boldly challenge the world to add one line or tint to the moral excellence of the Bible? No such addition has been made. Variation, illustration, adaptation, we have had in happy abundance, and we desire to have more and more, but to the integral substance nothing can be added. Art sits before the same landscapes; music interprets the same breezes; poetry handles the same harp; one generation passeth away and another generation cometh, but thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever. Another fair question is, If the moral code of the Bible is complete, how is that

completeness to be accounted for? Does any theory so thoroughly satisfy the inquiry as the answer, "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost"? That answer I am able to accept in all the fulness of its meaning and so to regard the "Holy Scripture" as indeed and in truth "the Word of God." But have not some beautiful hymns been added to the Bible? Not one. They are only beautiful because they are Biblical. Have not some noble, moral apothegms been added to the Bible? Not one. If one, produce it. If you produce it I will engage to find it in the Bible as to its spiritual veracity. If any man thinks he can add to the commandments of God, he may be the man who was in the apostle's mind when he wrote: "If there be any other commandment it is summed up in this word, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." They are, then, germ-commandments. There may be more in a commandment than there seems to be. Man's genius, even in commandment-making, cannot outrun or exceed God's inspiration.

How are the Biblical documents to be read? Can the technical or strictly professional grammarian read them? Can the mere elocutionist bring himself within the lines of their innermost meaning? It must, in simple justice to my purpose, be distinctly understood, that in speaking of the grammarian or the philologist, I speak of him only in his academical capacity, and in that capacity I hardly hesitate to deny his ability to read the Bible at all. I even doubt whether he should take upon himself the office of an interpreter. In holding this opinion I am not underestimating his ability; I am recognising the peculiar quality and unique purpose of the Bible. Thank God, the Church has ever been rich in men who are happily both grammarians and interpreters; I am, however, speaking of

grammatical experts who do not even profess to care for the Bible more than for any other book. A man may be able to parse a book without being able to understand it ; and a man may approve the grammar of a book in the very act of combating its doctrine. In reference to the Bible the grammarian, pure and simple, has an undoubtedly important work to do, but a still more important work to leave undone. He must pass from grammar to sympathy before he can understand or explain some passages. Grammar deals with syntax, philology deals with words ; sympathy penetrates the writer's soul, and elicits the half-expressed meaning of his heart. Perhaps only the mother can read the child's letter. But will God reveal more to ignorance than he will reveal to largeness of knowledge ? Who can say ? His way is in the whirlwind and in the cloud, and it is not known. He says he will look to the man who is of a broken heart ; and a little child is his image of greatness in his kingdom. It may be that some kind of ignorance is a qualification for receiving spiritual mysteries. Humility may be more and better than syntax, and "babes" may be trusted with revelations withheld from "the wise and prudent." "Even so, Father ; for so it seemed good in thy sight." God rejects the narrow wisdom which offers incense to its own vanity. "Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight." "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." "We speak the wisdom of God which none of the princes of this world knew." It was to very plain men that Jesus said : "It is given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given." Grammar and philology are indispensable within their own lines. No man must imagine that he is wise because he is not a grammarian. The dogmatism of

ignorance never rendered any real service to the truth. The cant of self-depreciation may be but concealed infallibility. It is important to make these things clear, that error may be avoided on both sides. Jesus Christ was reproached with never having learned letters ; yet his sayings are unfathomable, tabernacling in letters as angels might halt under the roof of men. My submission, then, is that the Bible is more than a book ; it is marked by a peculiar quality—the quality which makes the Bible what it is—a separating and differentiating quality—call it supremely spiritual, or call it distinctively supernatural—and that quality can only be penetrated by a spirit kindred to its own, and that in the reading of the innermost meaning of the Bible spiritual character is the chief medium or instrument of “the higher criticism.” The moment inspiration begins, the apparatus of criticism must be changed. It is admitted by all who regard the Bible as something more than an interesting collation of very ancient literature, that there is some kind of inspiration in it, that God is revealed in it, and that God’s will in some sense or degree is made known in it. At that point literal criticism begins to feel its limitations. At that point another function of inquiry or appreciation comes into action. The Apostle Paul puts the matter in the most lucid and acceptable manner when he says, “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, and he cannot know them because they are spiritually discerned, judged, or examined.” The Apostle claims that some things are “revealed through the Spirit.” He says, “the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.” The most profound literal criticism will pause at this point, and the ablest scholars will themselves be the first to confess that they are standing on holy ground. I claim, then, that in the degree in which the Bible is inspired, it can be truly

read only by the ministry of the inspiring Spirit, and that he only who receives the Holy Ghost can feel the power of Holy Scripture. The lexicon cannot supersede the Spirit.

With a theology so vast, so sublime, yet so practical, calling us to all that is mysterious and ghostly in adoration, summoning the soul into the inmost sanctuary of the Invisible God—without a shape on which to rest the affrighted eye, or a line on which to lay the trembling hand; calling us onward and upward through a silence that makes our very breathing a conscious trespass, and through a light from which our very purity shrinks in shame,—with a theology so practical as to search our hidden life as with fire, to test our standards and balances, to bring our words to judgment, and to track our daily course with the criticism of God,—with a theology demanding personal incarnation in fellowship and service, charging us with the sacred trust of representing Christ to a hostile world, and constantly charging us to prove the reality of our faith by the sincerity of our love,—with such a theology handed to us by inspired penmen for exposition and exemplification, who does not see that high above all other qualifications—even prophecy, tongues, mysteries, and all knowledge—must stand in holy isolation and solitary privilege the PURE HEART that alone can see God!

But there are not only documents, there are living prophets. It is claimed that some men are now inspired. It is also claimed that preachers, teachers, prophets, may now receive direct messages from God, and that until they do receive such messages they have no right or authority to preach. We must understand this statement before we can receive it. What does it mean? The inspiration of the human heart is perfectly possible apart from the reception of a new or personal message. We may be

inspired to read old messages aright. There may be an inspiration of delivery as well as an inspiration of authorship. We may be inspired to read and not to write. "Then opened he their understandings that they might understand the Scriptures." "Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." If we meditate day and night in the divine law, we may receive a truly divine inspiration, without being conscious of having received a formal message which has been withheld from every other praying soul. Every man will be inspired according to his own individuality. But we must beware lest we make any scripture of "private interpretation," and cry, lo here, or lo there, without Christ's authority. Inspired men may be least conscious of their own inspiration. The more a man is inspired the more clearly will he recognise inspiration in others. It is so in art, in statesmanship, in character; why not in our estimate of "the goodly fellowship of the prophets," and "the glorious company of the apostles?" If every man is to preach the special message which he is supposed to have received from God we shall have not a few conflicting inspirations. But precisely the same difficulty arises from an inspired reading of an inspired book. All sermons do not agree. All doctrines do not agree. All conceptions of the Church do not agree. Yet all are supposed to be traceable to the Bible or to be actually founded upon its distinct teaching. Able attempts have been made in all Christian centuries to propitiate the infidel when he has asked whether such and such discrepancies can be reconciled, or such and such sanguinary policies can have been instigated or approved by a God of mercy, or such and such anomalies would be permitted to exist if the supposed Ruler of the world were really omnipotent? But that line of questioning only begins the deeper and bitterer interrogation,—it is unbelief

in its crudest state. Unbelief not only attacks the historical and external contradictions of the Bible, it follows faith into the interpretation of what we call the deep things of God and ridicules its most cherished sanctities : unbelief mocks at prayer ; it jeers at a Bible out of which both the Trinitarian and the Unitarian bring convincing and overwhelming proof ; it mocks the Arminian and the Calvinist as each goes to the same book to prove that the other is wrong ; to the most solitary and august of all Sufferers it says—" Save thyself and come down from the cross ;" and it flippantly regards the Future as a cloud and Heaven as a fantasy. Unbelief is not confined to technicalities. It is really a mistake to suppose that Unbelief is standing outside the ring-fence of Faith, sobbing out its tender heart and begging Christian scholars to explain how, in Samuel, David took from the King of Zobah a thousand and seven hundred horsemen, and how, in Chronicles, he took from the same king, apparently on the same occasion, a thousand chariots and seven thousand horsemen. Dear, sweet, guileless Unbelief is quite prepared to enter the church and enjoy the sacraments if only the number of horses could be made the same in one book as it is in the other. No, No ; that is not the measure of Unbelief. That is only where Unbelief begins. When he has been satisfied respecting the horse and his rider, the docile infidel will say—" And, how are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come ?" Do not imagine that the delightful infidel, that pet of all juveniles, is only waiting to see the Hexateuch properly dated and properly signed, in order that he may adopt the creeds and idolise " the historic episcopate." Infidelity, where it is honest and courageous, sets itself in ostentatious hostility along the whole line of the supernatural, the revealed, and the inspired, and not merely against certain literal and obvious

discrepancies. By all means let discrepancies be reconciled or removed—scholarship is quite equal to this useful work—but do not suppose that the successful re-adjustment of chronologies, dates, and authorships, will lead the infidel to accept the Bible as “the inspired record of the Word of God.” I question whether it would even help him to do so. Possibly it would bring into more vivid and revolting significance the fact that he “did not like to retain God in his knowledge” (Rom. i. 28). It is not for me to become a judge of motive, or to defame men simply because they differ from me; neither is it for me to contradict “the inspired record of the Word of God” when it declares that certain men “became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened,” and “they changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator who is blessed for ever.”

I am addressing myself to the point that men may to-day be as directly inspired as were the apostles, and I merely noticed the infidel by the way. That there are honest infidels may be quite as true as that some men are born blind. My point is that even now teachers who see no reason to doubt their own inspiration differ from one another in their interpretation of “the inspired record of the Word of God.” Then what is the value of inspiration? When a house is divided against itself can it surely stand? When inspiration has lost its consistency has it not forfeited its authority? Can a fountain send forth sweet waters and bitter? If the inspired men of the present day give different views of fact; if the very first sentence in some of their books is a mis-statement; if their very prefaces are marked by glaring errors of fact; does not this throw a strong light upon some things in the

obviously mechanical part of the Bible? Is there not an inspiration of doctrine? Is there not an inspiration that leaves the self-boastful intellect alone and delivers its holy message to the obedient heart alone? There is no need to be afraid of apparently conflicting inspirations when the moral purpose is noble. The poorest of all consistency may be identity in words. I do not doubt that a strong Biblical argument could be drawn up in support of free-will, and certainly an equally strong argument could be drawn up in support of predestinarianism. Nothing can be clearer than the humanity of Christ as delineated in the New Testament; he is called "a man mighty in word and deed," and again he is called "the man Christ Jesus"; he said he did not speak his own words but the words of him who sent him; he said his Father was greater than he, and "being in an agony he prayed." On the other hand, Jesus Christ has been adored and trusted as God the Son, and his deity has been defended out of the very New Testament which is supposed to have proved his simple but holy manhood. Paul is supposed to have taught salvation by faith, and James is regarded as having taught salvation by works. It is possible that some minds may regard these as infinitely greater discrepancies and confusions than those connected with dates, localities, battles, spoils, and pedigrees, and if they are irreconcilable I agree with the estimate formed of their importance. They do not put my faith to any strain. There are great discrepancies amongst human minds. There are great discrepancies in each individual human mind. Man may be described as self-discrepant. Inspiration operating through such instruments must be affected by the medium of its action. One man is a poet, another is a reasoner, will they report upon any mystery in the same way? Will they see exactly the same thing and nothing more in any fact in life? I believe

that Jesus Christ was a man, and I also believe that he was God the Son. Faith has its function, and so has obedience. Man's will is free within God's sovereignty. The bird may fly in the open firmament, but it cannot pass beyond the horizon. Things apparently so antagonistic do not necessarily contradict each other; when justly interpreted they may complete each other. It is along this line that I find satisfaction and peace. A chapter of Paul should be followed by a chapter of James. The miracles and the beatitudes should be read together. The doctrine of mutual completion should be applied along the whole line of thought and experience. No one minister is the Ministry. No one communion is the Church. No one man is Humanity. We need all the parts to make the whole, and we need the whole to understand each of the parts.

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